

GOIN' BACK TO CALL: **BEACH, BIKINIS, AND MONTELL'S BIG BLACK TRUCK**

WIBE

**GOODIE
MOB**

**LENNY
KRAVITZ**

XSCAPE

**IT AIN'T
EAZY**

THE FUTURE OF
RUTHLESS

SPIKE LEE'S

GOT GAME,

BULWORTH'S

BANANAS:

OUR GODZILLA

SUMMER FILM

PREVIEW

**WET
DREAM
USHER'S
BIG SPLASH**

**PLUS: BLONDIE
AND MR. AND MRS.
IKE TURNER**

\$3.99 JUNE/JULY 1998

DISPLAY UNTIL JUNE 30, 1998

07



70988 35395 4

WWW.WIBE.COM



1. Follow instructions on the other side

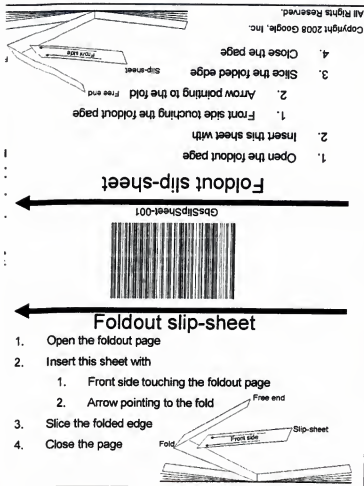
Back

GossipBack-001B



Back

1. Follow instructions on the other side



A surreal, high-contrast photograph of a house exterior. The house has green horizontal siding. A white-framed window with white shutters is open, revealing a woman with blonde hair wearing a floral dress, looking out. A small, dark-colored animal sits on the windowsill. To the right of the window, a black mailbox is mounted on the wall with the numbers 3, 7, and 5 stacked vertically. In the foreground, a pig is sitting on a yellow and brown patterned lawn chair. An American flag is partially visible in the bottom right corner.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

11 mg. "tar", 0.9 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.



VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED

THIS AD CONTAINS: ▶

SS Satisfied Smoking

FV Farm Violence

AN Animal Nudity

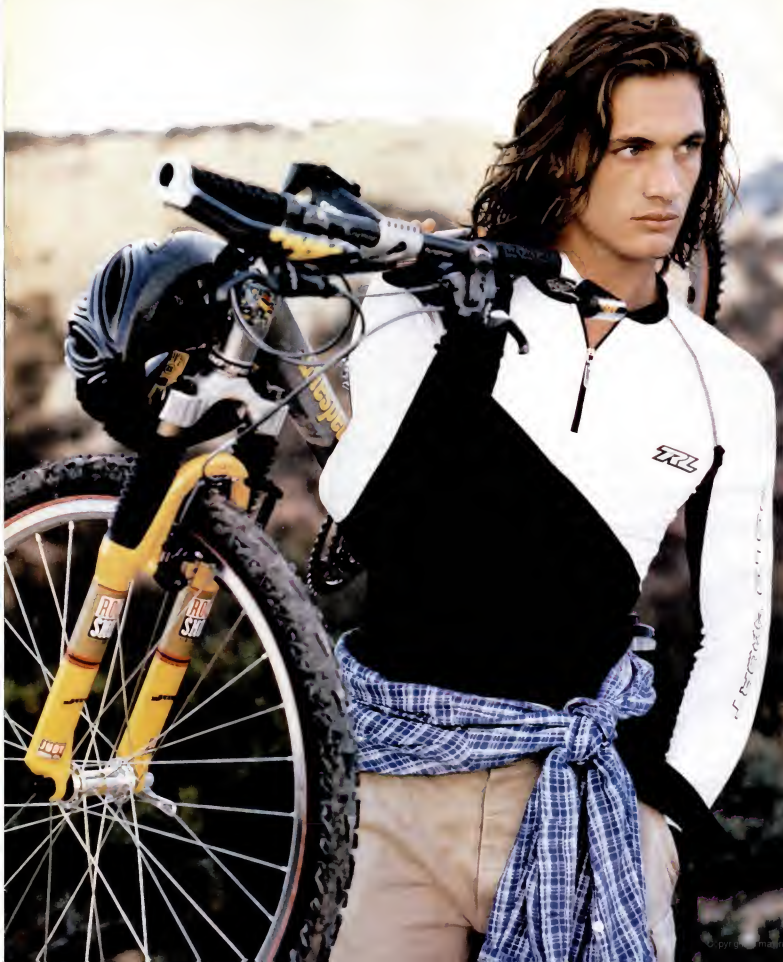
Mighty Tasty!



This One



KFD2-FEY-UW3P



THE FITNESS FRAGRANCE BY RALPH LAUREN



HECHTS
strawbridge's
1-800-424-9206



STOP THEM COLD IN THE EQUIPMENT PREDATOR ACCELERATOR. IT'S BUILT WITH
THESE SHOES HELP EDDIE POPE MAXIMIZE HIS SPEED AND AGILITY.



HAVE A NICE DAY



OUR  FEET YOU WEAR™ DESIGN SO IT PERFORMS LIKE THE PLAYER'S OWN FOOT.
THEY'LL GIVE YOU AN EDGE TOO. FIND OUT HOW AT www.adidas.com.

I DRINK VERY
EXPENSIVE VODKA.

I'M STILL NOT
SLEEPING WITH YOU.

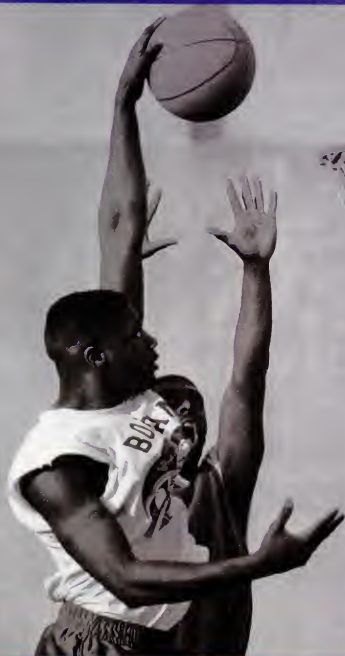




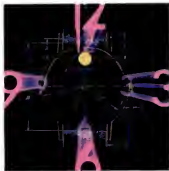
ALL VODKA. NO PRETENSE.

Distilled under the
world famous Smirnoff
DISTILLERY

INSTANT IMPACT. JUST ADD WATER.



**HUNGRY FOR LIFE
THIRSTY FOR NAYA®**



About the legendary gold dot dial: Nathan George Horwitt, the artist, conceived of a watch without numbers as an experiment in pure, functional and "uncluttered" design.

(M) A SCULPTURAL INTERPRETATION OF A LEGEND IN MODERN DESIGN.



Movado watches are exhibited in these museums around the world:

Städtisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, "Neue Sammlung", Munich, Germany

Museum Moderne Kunst Vienna, Austria

Museo de Arte Moderno Bogotá, Colombia

Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Caracas, Venezuela

Finnish Museum of History, Espoo/Helsinki

Saxon Museum of Art Tokyo, Japan

Museum of Decorative Art Copenhagen, Denmark

Museo de Bellas Artes Bilbao, Spain

Design Museum London, England

Kawasaki City Museum Kawasaki, Japan

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England

Museum Ludwig Cologne, Germany

Museum Beyer Zurich, Switzerland

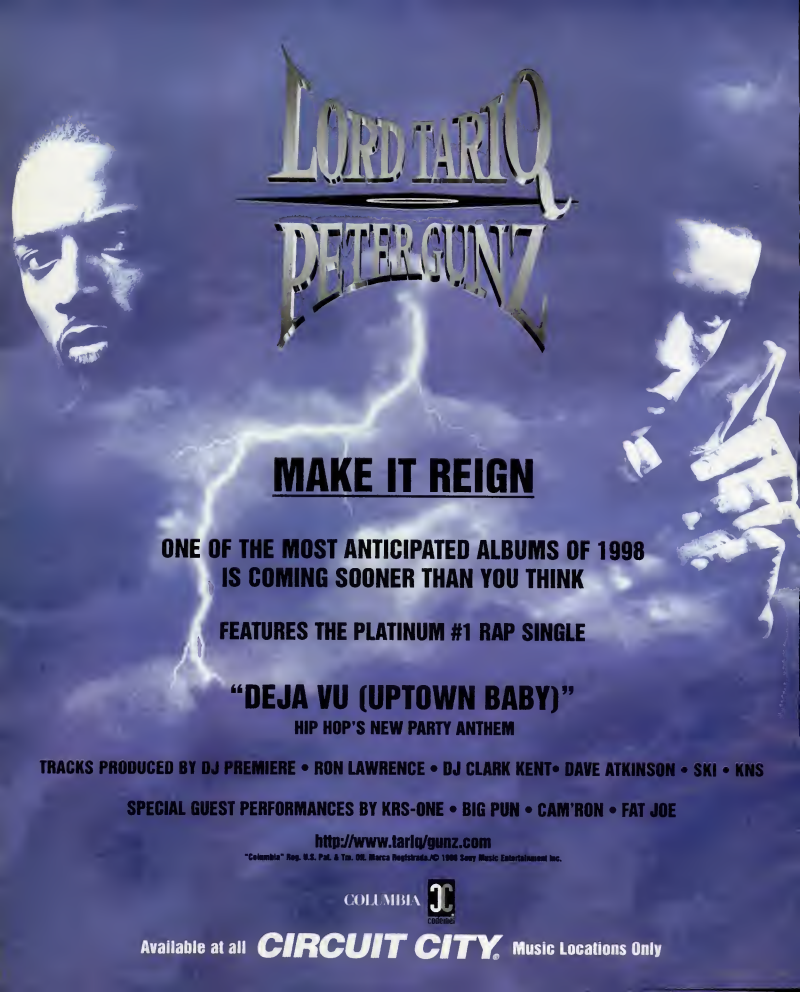
Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

The Museum Trevi™ Watch. Satin finish stainless steel with textured 18K gold micron finish bezel, crown protector and bracelet links. Deployment clasp. Swiss quartz movement. Sapphire crystal. Water resistant to 99 feet. His or hers, \$1295.

MOVADO.
The Museum. Watch.
SWISS

macy's

For more information, call: 1-888-5MOVADO. <http://www.movado.com>



LORD TARIQ PETER GUNZ

MAKE IT REIGN

ONE OF THE MOST ANTICIPATED ALBUMS OF 1998
IS COMING SOONER THAN YOU THINK

FEATURES THE PLATINUM #1 RAP SINGLE

"DEJA VU (UPTOWN BABY)"

HIP HOP'S NEW PARTY ANTHEM

TRACKS PRODUCED BY DJ PREMIERE • RON LAWRENCE • DJ CLARK KENT • DAVE ATKINSON • SKI • KNS

SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMANCES BY KRS-ONE • BIG PUN • CAM'RON • FAT JOE

<http://www.tariq/gunz.com>

"Columbia" Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Marca Registrada. © 1998 Sony Music Entertainment Inc.

COLUMBIA



Available at all **CIRCUIT CITY** Music Locations Only

Designed and Distributed by Milan Fragrances, Inc., Beverly Hills, CA. © 1998 www.michael-jordan-cologne.com



Michael Jordan



**MICHAEL
JORDAN™**
c o l o g n e



Michael Jordan Cologne at...



Foot Locker.

True Baller®

Life Style Clothing for True Ball Players

CAM'RON and CHARLI BALTIMORE



Available at



Foot Locker

Los Angeles Oakland Dallas Houston New Orleans Atlanta Chicago Detroit Washington D.C. New York

FOR INFO: Contact 1-877-8BALLER

ART DIR: Drew Campbell PHOTO: Jerry Jack UNENTERTAINMENT RECORDING ARTISTS CAM'RON and CHARLI BALTIMORE TRUE BALLER is a registered trademark of Tech Graphics East Inc. 1998

stimulating

**GINSENG
MIRACLE**



New!

FREE SAMPLES: To receive free samples send 1 dollar for postage and handling to Ginseng Miracle Dept. VBS P.O. Box 3005 New Rochelle NY 10801



FUBU

The New Era Of Designers
www.fubu.com

Plenty's about to go down...

Babyface and Des'ree

BLACKstreet featuring Lamenga Kafi and Beverly Crowder
Erykah Badu

Jayo Felony featuring Method Man and DMX
S W V

Jon B. & CoKo featuring Jay-Z
Faith Evans

Az Yet

Queen Pen & Tracey Lee

Chico DeBarge

Changing Faces

Absolute

Shya

From the producers who brought you "SOUL FOOD"
MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE

Hav Plenty

The new soundtrack featuring the hot singles, "FIRE," a duet with BABYFACE AND DES'REE, JAYO FELONY'S "WHATCHA GONNA DO (featuring Method Man and DMX)", and "Can't Get You Out Of My Mind" by BLACKstreet featuring Lamenga Kafi and Beverly Crowder

Executive Producers: Tracey E. Edmonds and Michael McQuarn

Soundtrack In Stores June 9th.

Movie In Theaters June '98.



SONY MUSIC
SOUNDTRAX

MIRAMAX



Wanderlust
Pictures

"999 Music" and design, "99999", "999" and "99" Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Miramax Records Inc. © 1998 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. (S) Filmworks is a trademark of Silverlight Entertainment. (F) is a trademark of Filmworks Entertainment, Inc. © 1998 Miramax Film Corp., all rights reserved.

Tommy Hilfiger and [] are registered trademarks. Tommy is a trademark. © Tommy Hilfiger U.S.A., Inc.



tommy

the real american fragrance

FEATURES

JUNE/JULY 1998 • VOLUME 8, NUMBER 5

FEATURES

AQUA FRESH

Atlanta's young Adonis surfs a tidal wave of success. Will Usher wipe out? *By Alan Light. Photographs by Butch Belair*

REVOLUTION ROCK

Though they're *Still Standing*, the Goodie MOB sit with *Davey Boy!* *Photograph by Pauline St. Denis*

BAD MAMMA JAMMAS

Xscape's Beauty is as beauty does. *By Andria M. Duncan. Photograph by Catalina Gonzalez*

THE LAST TEMPTATION OF SPIKE

Spike Lee's aiming to do the right thing—again. *By Craig Barboza. Illustration by Johanna Goodman*

BIG BLACK TRUCK

Peter Dinklage takes a RIDE with Montell Jordan. *Photographs by B+*

IT AIN'T EASY

Girl, it ain't easy. Tomica Woods-Wright, Eazy-E's widow, is one tuff bookie. *By RJ Smith. Photograph by Jeff Dunas*

UNFORGIVEN

Who's afraid of Ike Turner? *Ann Marlowe* gets intimate with the founder of rock 'n' roll. *Photographs by Michael Tighe*

FASHION

VIBEFASHION: SPLASH

Stripping down and lockin' it poolside in the City of Angels. *Photographs by Dewey Nicks. Styling by Emil Wilbekin*

VIBESTYLE: GOLDEN GIRLS

Starlets strut their stuff in minuscule bikinis. *Photographs by Lorenzo Agius. Styling by Emil Wilbekin*

VIBESTYLE: CALIFORNIA LOVE

Lovers chase waves from here to eternidad. *Photographs by Robert Fleischauer. Styling by Emil Wilbekin*

THE STYLIST: LEVEL 7

BEAR: Sunglasses

VIBEFACE: Chari Baltimore

Photograph by Lorenzo Agius. Styling by Emil Wilbekin

ABOVE: Senae Lathan photographed by Lorenzo Agius; styling by Emil Wilbekin; make-up by Scott Patric for Shu Uemura; hair by Cernai for Cernai Inc.; body makeup by Allison Burns; prop styling by Dane Holweger; bikini by Gucci; shoes by Manolo Blahnik
ON THE COVER: Usher photographed exclusively for VIBE by Butch Belair; grooming by Heba Thorisdottir for Rax; hair by Scorpio Spicer for the Comic Store; cargo pants by DKNY Jeans. SEE THE DETAILS



For 450 years
the finest spirits
have shared a
common spirit:
Puerto Rico



Rums of Puerto Rico. Enjoy the Spirit!

Since 1548, Puerto Rico has been producing the finest rums. Today, over 11 fine rum brands are made in Puerto Rico. Enjoy your favorite brand, straight or mixed, and discover the smoothness that only comes from a 450 year heritage of producing the finest rums.

Puerto Rican Rum.
Make sure it's on the label.

The finest rum is made in Puerto Rico.
enjoy it today.

El Convento Hotel, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Only the Finest Rums
come from Puerto Rico

Rums of
PUERTO RICO 

Ask for them by name: Ron Bacoy, Ron del Barrilito, Don Q, Palo Viejo and Ronrico, among others.

DEPARTMENTS

40 CONTRIBUTORS 42 WORD IS BOND

61 MAIL: Badass Brandy; Straight-up Foxy; Jamie Foxx checks in; Jerry Springer sprung; and Poppa Iverson

61 START

The Funky Bilingual. *By Cory Takahashi*
Plus: Indie Labels, Milelepa Tibetan Freedom Concert No. 3, Young Blood and Dr. Seuss, First Amendment Follies: C-Bo Fights the Fuzz.

65 CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

By Chairman Mao

62 SOUND CHECK: ROSARIO DAWSON

By Bobbito Garcia

70 SPECIAL REPORT:

MTV's sour grapes.

75 IN THE MIX

80 TURN OF STREET

By Bónz Malone

84 POWER

SKINNIN' HEADS. If you can't beat 'em, beat 'em.

By Jonathan Franklin

88 NEXT

VIBE scours heaven and hell to bring you the best of gospel music and hardcore rap:

SAINT QUEEN ESTHER

MARROW AND THE

HARLEM GOSPEL SINGERS:

Bringing Harlem to the Vatican.

SAINT KAREN CLARK-

SHEARD: Sharing Him with you.

SINNER NOREAGA: Career

thug starving for attention.

SINNER CAM'RON: Baby-faced

killer lyricist.

130 VIBEARTS

FILM: SUMMER FILM GUIDE.

By Gary Dauphin

158 DR. SNAKESKIN'S VIDEO REVIEWS:

The Devil's Advocate

REVIEWS: *Hoo Plenty*, *He Got Game*, *Hope Floats*

166 TV: Steve Harris, *Mt. Gettys*

162 BOOKS: *Rapper's Delight*, *Central Avenue Sound*, *Rocking*

My Life Awaits, *Purple Reign*.

170 REVOLUTIONS

Lenny Kravitz. *By Gabriel Alvarez*.

Plus: Tricky, Gloria Estefan, John Forte, Room

Service, David Sanchez, Money Mark. *From*

Where I Stand: The Black Experience in Country

Music, Cormega, Ultra Naté, Buddy Guy,

Tami Davis, *Hoo Plenty*, Medek, Martin &

Wood, McGruff, Mya, Angin.

176 BOOM SHOTS: By Rob Krone

176 A+B

180 EL RITMO: By Cristina Verde

184 20 QUESTIONS

188 PROPS: Blondie. By Amy Linden

Tomika Woods-Wright exclusively photographed by Jeff Dumas; styling by Eric Berg for Rea; makeup by Monique Burke for Rea; hair by Bruce Law for the Crystal Agency; black slip dress by Anna Sul



The remarkable thing is, you can't even see it from the narrow stretch of highway that takes you there. Instead, you are struck only by the rich green hue of the surrounding hills for which the town was named.

In short, it's about as far removed as you can get from how anyone might picture the setting for a car factory.

So where exactly is Spring Hill? Let's just say it's about a million miles from Detroit.

And ever since the first Saturn rolled off the assembly line there, it's brought a breath of notably fresh air to the auto industry. A place where it's actually become possible to start over and build a car in this country better than it's ever been built before.

Where labor and management share an equal voice. Factory technicians are free to act on their ideas. And a group of spirited retailers have made it easy and—dare we say—*fun* to buy a car.

All in all, a pretty different place. To which we ask, when do you suppose doing the right thing won't be considered different?



A DIFFERENT KIND of COMPANY. A DIFFERENT KIND of CAR.

The 1998 Saturn SC2 comes with an M.S.R.P. of \$15,295, including A.C., retailer prep and transportation. Of course, options, tax and license are extra. We'll be happy to provide more information at 1-800-522-5000, or visit us on the Internet at www.saturn.com. ©1997 Saturn Corporation.









It's your skin... indulge it



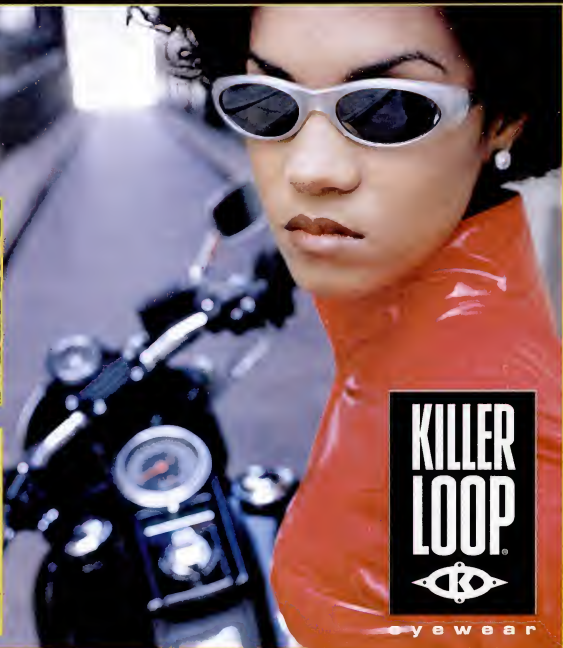
Motions
SKIN™

MOTIONS SKIN PRODUCTS MAY BE PURCHASED AT SALONS OR BEAUTY SUPPLY STORES

P97032-A

THE

KILLER ELITE



**KILLER
LOOP**



eyewear

Available At: Beyond The Beach • Bloomingdale's • Jumbo Sports

FOR MORE INFO 1-800-343-5554

The new album from

Montell Jordan

let's ride

Featuring the #1 Single

"Let's Ride"

(Ft. Master P and Silkk the Shocker)

"Can I" and

"When You Get Home"

Album In Stores Now!

def soul



© 1998 Def Jam Music Group, Inc.

VIBE
PRESENTS

THE
BACARDI
LIMÓN[®]
STYLE SHOW

*featuring today's coolest fashions,
designers and models
with music's hottest DJs and artists*

COMING TO A RUNWAY NEAR YOU
NEW YORK, MAY 21
WASHINGTON D.C., JUNE 4
ATLANTA, JUNE 25
CHICAGO, JULY 16
LOS ANGELES, AUGUST 13



VIBE®

Founder and Chairman
Quincy Jones

Editor-in-Chief Danyel Smith

Managing Editor	Jesse Washington
Music Editor	Sacha Jenkins
Feature Editors	Carver Harris, Robert Kenner
Associate Music Editor	Mingya Oh
Associate Editor	David Bry
Copy Editor	Chiedo Nwocha
Research Chief	Ava Chin
Executive Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief	Raquel May
Assistant Editors	Sham Sutton, Rochell Thomas
Researcher/Reporter	Shelley Jefferson
National Affairs Editor	Farai Chideya
Writers-at-Large	Gary Dauphin, Kathy Dobie, Karen R. Good, Michael A. Gonzales, Chairman Mao, Greg Tate
Editorial Assistant	Kenya N. Byrd
Contributors	Bonz Malone
Art Director	Dwayne Shaw
Picture Editor	George Pitts
Designer	Brandon Kavella
Art/Photo Assistant	Duane Poyas
Design/Production Assistant	Megan Barnes
Fashion Director	Emil Wilbekin
Style Editor	Mimi Valdes
Fashion Assistant	Katana Lee
Vice President/Director of Media Ventures	Fred McIntyre
New Media Coordinator	Reggie Miller
Technical Manager	Michael Hauswirth
Editor-at-Large	Alan Light
Editorial Director	Gilbert Rogin

Contributors

Harry Allen, Gabriel Alvarez, Jeannine Amber, Craig Barboza, Michael Eric Dyson, Bobbito Garcia, Elysa Gardner, Nelson George, Johanna Goodman, Deborah Gregory, dream hampton, James Hunter, Darius James, Laura Jamison, Lisa Jones, Robert Morales, Elena Oumano, Cristina Verán, Harry Winger, Jason Whitlock, Dontay Wilder, Joe Wood, Kristal Brent Zook

Photographers

Ruven Afanador, Lorenzo Agius, Kwaku Akoton, B+, Marc Baptiste, Barron Claiborne, Geoffroy de Boismenu, Exum, Larry Fink, Gusman, Daniel Hastings, Jayson Keeling, Phil Knott, Dah Len, Dana Lizenberg, Arnaldo Anaya-Lucca, Tiziano Magni, Jonathan Mannion, Robert Maxwell, Melodie McDaniel, Jeff Riedel, Nina Schultz, Karina Taira, Tajima, Mpori Mshale Tolbert, Darryl Turner, Andrew Williams, Everard Williams Jr., Dan Winters, Christian Wink

Freelance Copy/Research

Ayana Byrd, Kevin Giordano, Marla Glickman, Max Padilla, Jen Reisman,
Mark Schwartz, Vinita Srivastava

Interns

Deborah Boardley, Ryan Carroll, Robert Fuller, Debbie Guirand,
Joshua Koren, Keishia N. Lee, Khamsi Louard, Winifred Mbewe,
Kathleen Murray, Maya Nettles, Anamary Pelayo, Rebecca Perez, Willa Reinhard,
Ra'Chelle Rogers, Mykella Van Cooten, Maneka Wade



Subscription requests, address changes, and adjustments should be directed to
VIBE, Box 9580, Boulder, CO 80322-9580

www.vibe.com

available at:

footaction, usa

macys, herald square

transit

for more information call 800 851 4304

Get Straight

If you want it straight, let me give it to you straight. It's all about the look. When I walk into a room, my look speaks for itself. The nails, the shoes and hair that says Dark & Lovely. So if my hair's straight, I'm straight. That's why I use Dark & Lovely No-Lye Relaxer with Ultra-deep Conditioning to get the hairstyle I want.

So get it straight with Dark & Lovely.



**Dark & Lovely.
Straight Out OF The Box.**

Hair: Dark & Lovely Plus Relaxer & Hair Care Therapy
Make-Up: Dark & Lovely Cosmetics
Lips: Aubergine
Nails: Blackberry

 ©1996 CARSON, INC.

Sprite pump it or dump it

Every month you'll be able to preview songs by new artists by calling the following number and entering the number of the song you wish to preview. Then you decide if it Pumps or Dumps. The following month we'll post the results and offer new songs for Sprite lovers to Pump or Dump! Press 5 to repeat a tune and 6 to skip to the next tune.

212.796.DUMP (3 8 6 7)

212 ALLFrums Tha i
"Fill My Cup"
ALLFrums Tha i
Priority Records

213 Def Squad
"Full Competition"
Def Squad
Def Jam

214 Wood Dwellas
"Strange Fruit"
Midnight Run
Dark Waters Music

APRIL SPRITE "PUMP IT OR DUMP IT" RESULTS: CAPPADONNA led the competition with his ilmatic cut "Run" capturing 421 pumps. Newcomer CAM'RON's "Magnum" made a strong showing of 408 pumps for the second place position while labelmate CHARLIE BALTIMORE's "Money" came in third. The veteran group GANSTARR and hot-lanta artist GOODIE MOB rounded out the field at fourth and fifth respectively.



obey your thirst.™



You will be charged for a regular telephone call into the (212) NYC area code.
QUESTIONS? Call Touch Tunes at 212-643.1853. Lines active from 5/5 to 6/23.



President and C.E.O. Keith T. Clinkscals

Publisher John Rollins

Leonard E. Burnett Jr.
Mark Ekstrom
James Hassan Spencer
Matthew Pressman
Robin Gibson
Nelson Boyce
Abigail Marcus
Elaine Forcher
Michelle Tennant
Alma Lopez
Alma Biddle, Kioka Abbott, Shirley Vasquez

Marketing Director Jeanine Trnko
Marketing Manager Fred T. Jackson
Marketing Research Director Kim Ford
Events Director Belle Fu
Creative Services Manager Karla Y. Radford
Director of Communications Fernando Mancuello
Research Analyst Audrey Addison
Ally Cole

New York Advertising Sales
215 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10066
(212) 448-7300; fax (212) 448-7400

West Coast Advertising Sales
720 Wilshire Boulevard, Penthouse
Santa Monica, CA 90401
(310) 899-5270; fax (310) 899-5277
Onnalee Gutman, MacDonald
Marian Enley
Meghan Daly

Pacific Northwest Advertising Sales
2 Enshorado Center
San Francisco, CA 94111
(415) 391-9720; fax (415) 391-9722
Kathleen Guthrie
Lisa Hartigan

Midwest Advertising Sales
303 East Ohio Street, 43rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 321-7908; fax (312) 321-7916
Renard Gibbs
Ann David
Kim Collins

Detroit Advertising Sales
RPM Associates
2030 Southfield Road, Suite 31
Southfield, MI 48076
(248) 557-7490; fax (248) 557-7499
Tom Prendergast

European Advertising Representative
18 Media
Via G. Lombardi Milano 20129
Tel: (39-2) 2952-9712; fax (39-2) 2952-3430
Jeffrey Byrnes

Circulation Director Dana Sachet
Newsstand Director Michelle Sheidlower
Subscription Manager Leslie Guaminien
Fulfillment Manager Susan Young
Circulation Coordinator Ilene Burros
Newsstand Coordinator Derral T. Christon

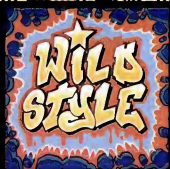
Chief Financial Officer George Joost
Finance Manager Liping Wang
Production Director Ryan Jones
Associate Production Manager Alicia Ward

Office Manager Julie Evans-Hall
Assistant Office Manager Janet Kendrick
Mailroom Manager Rigoberto Gomez

VIBE/SPIN Ventures
Quincy Jones, Robert L. Miller, David Salzman,
Keith T. Clinkscals, John Rollins, Gilbert Rogan



THE ART



HAS MANY STYLES 'CAUSE YOU'RE
STAYIN' TRUE TO WHAT YOU DO



OBEY YOUR THIRST. SPRITE.

©1987 The Coca-Cola Company. "Sprite" and "Obey Your Thirst" are registered trademarks of Coca-Cola.

©1987 registered trademark

ICE CUBE

WAR & PEACE

VOLUME I (THE WAR DISC)

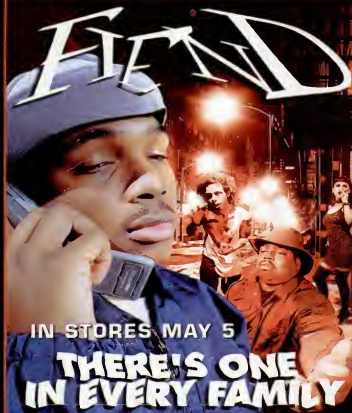
HIS FIRST SOLO RELEASE IN 4 YEARS
THE FIRST EPISODE FROM THE TWO PART CD EPIC
ALTERING EXISTENCE SUMMER '98

PRIORITY
RECORDS

© 1998 Ruff House

ynghed al

NO LIMIT RECORDS - WE RUN THE STREETS

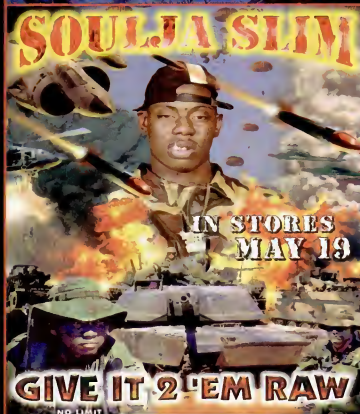


IN STORES MAY 5

**THERE'S ONE
IN EVERY FAMILY**



**In Stores
August 4th**



**IN STORES
MAY 19**

GIVE IT 2'EM RAW



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: MASTER P



NO LIMIT RECORDS - THE WORLD'S #1 INDEPENDENT LABEL

Master P



Master P's last solo album in stores June 2nd

MP Da Last Don

look for the new movie

"The Last Don" in stores June 2nd



EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: MASTER P



Love Never Felt This Good.

XSCAPE

Traces Of My Lipstick

Executive Producer: Jermaine Dupri

The multi-platinum group is back with the HIT single
THE ARMS OF THE ONE WHO LOVES YOU

Executive Producer: Diane Warren

Also includes the red hot singles
AM I DREAMIN' AND MY LITTLE SECRET

www.SoSoDef.net



CIRCUIT CITY
Price • Selection • Service ®

Available at all Music Locations Only.

COLUMBIA **SoSoDef**
* Columbia® Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Warner Reg.® 1999. Name, Music, Performance © Def.



Phat Farm

THE FOUR-POCKET JEAN FOR MEN



CLASSIC AMERICAN FLAVA

BROWNS FOCUS, LONDON FRED SEGAL, LOS ANGELES PHAT FARM, NEW YORK

©2005, Phat Records, LLC
Visit Our Phat Farm Web Site: www.phatfarm.com



© 1998 Ford Motor Company. *MSRP, as shown \$14,720 MSRP. Excludes PEP 323A and Sport Appearance Package. Tax and title are extra.

starting at **\$11,995***

zx2

for it

go

★ **go for power** 130-horsepower engine

★ **go for volume** premium speakers

★ **go for ease** remote keyless entry



www.ford.com

Copyright © 1999 Ford Motor Company

CK^{be}

personal. peaceful. warm.



The fragrance for people.

introducing a great
new size!
1.7oz eau de toilette, only \$28*

available at Belk

*suggested retail price

©1997 Calvin Klein Inc. All rights reserved. CK is a registered trademark of Calvin Klein Inc.

THE GUEST LIST



So, **RJ Smith**, when are you most creative? "Three hours after I've blown my deadline," says Smith, who checks in with Ruthless Records CEO Tomica Woods-Wright (page 118). This native Detroiter enjoys collecting Moog Synthesizer records and photos of old "wack-looking" jazz guys. He also keeps busy by asking off-the-wall questions to Hollywood beauties like Pam Grier, whom he asked, Are you aware of how sexy your nose is? Well, if you're nosy and you know it, then snoop around the pages of SPIN for RJ's byline, where he's a senior contributing writer.

Illustrator **Johanna Goodman** knew early on that she was nice with a pencil—she went to a birthday party and ended up drawing a picture of the hula dancer. "I was only five," says Goodman, "and it was the first time I got attention from my ill' friends, and I thought, Wow! I'm really good!" She says her Spike Lee portrait (page 110) went through 30 revisions before she was happy with it. Ever the perfectionist, Goodman admits blocking out all memories of creating a "bad drawing." She's doodled on the pages of *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The Village Voice*, *Swing*, *Working Woman*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Jazz Times*.



DEWEY DOG



Dewey Nicks is definitely a water lover, so we let him lounge by the pool for our bathing suit fashion party (page 132). To protect his buttery skin, this lensman packs the essentials when he hits the water. "I use Water Babies tanning lotion with an SPF of sixty. If it's good enough for a baby, then it's good enough for me!" says Nicks matter-of-factly. When he isn't diving off 60-foot cliffs in Hawaii, Dewey's shooting advertising campaigns for Tommy Hilfiger, Isaac Mizrahi, Quiksilver, and Union Bay, as well as commercials for Coca-Cola and ESPN.

Who knew the plastic Pentax **Pauline St. Denis** received at the tender age of five (as a free give away from a Cleveland gas station) would help shape her photography style. "My style is to create multiple images, and I do them with lots of used plastic and junk cameras," says Pauline, who captured the Goodie M.O.B. (page 104) on film this month. "I like the the predictable mistakes of the plastic lenses—especially the light leaks and sun glares." Pauline's work has appeared in *Contents*, *Mademoiselle*, *Vogue*, and *Bikini*.



THE LIGHT

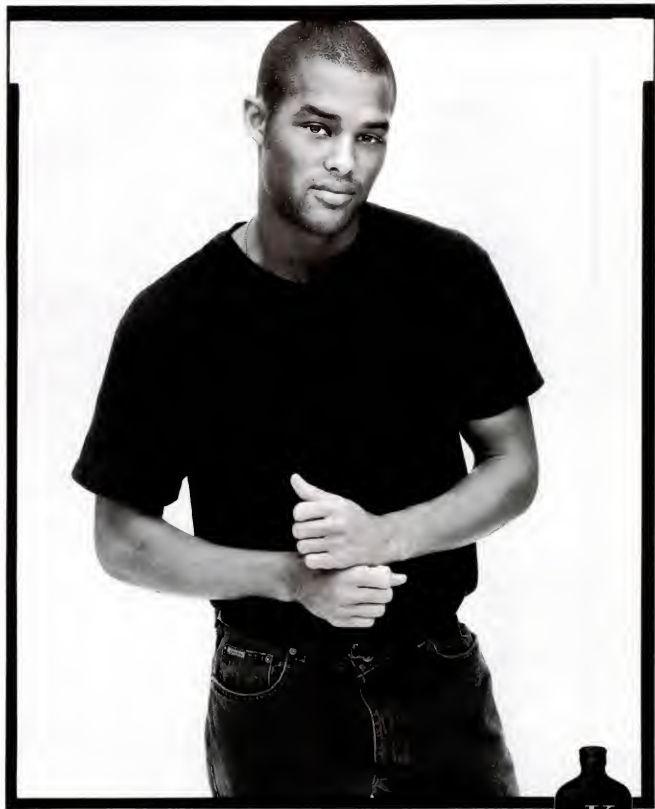


Unlike Usher (page 96), **VIBE** Editor-at-Large **Alan Light** says he's never wanted to leave the one he's with to start a new relationship. "I've been on the other end, though. I've been left more than I'd like to admit," says Alan. But it's all good "cause this 31-year-old Leo keeps such a hectic schedule, there's no time for him to be lonely. In addition to writing cover stories like his Kirk Franklin piece (October 1997), Alan also oversees our book projects, like *VIBE's* 1997 bestseller *Tupac Shakur* (Crown). When Alan can escape, he gets cozy with his girl at his new home in upstate New York. He also writes for SPIN.

IN-HOUSE COUNSEL



Some ladies have all the fun, and **VIBE's** Style Editor, **Mimi Valdés**, has had her share. In between journalism gigs, this Puerto Rican/Cuban beauty has done everything from modeling in Paris to working at a record label. Every month, she conceptualizes and produces the style stories—such as this issue's "Kallifornia Love" (page 142) and "Golden Girls" (page 138)—and writes *V* Face, Gear, and Scoop. She also squeezes out a music feature or two when she can, like our Wu-Tang cover (September 1997). And if you're curious as to what styles this diva would outlaw, the answer is...none. "I would force people to take a look in the mirror," Mimi says. "I'm convinced those who wear ridiculous outfits don't own a mirror!"



be hot. be cool. just be.

ck be. The fragrance for people. Calvin Klein.



word is bond

"God is a trip...I think he was an MC."

—Cee-Lo of Goodie MOB to VIBE staffer David Bry in an Atlanta restaurant. ("I had a little dream...where I died and got to heaven," Cee-Lo said. "I saw God, and he looked like me, just bigger.")

"The mole is alive and well and less malignant than you are."

—Liz Rosenberg, Madonna spokesperson, discussing with a New York Post reporter the singer's signature beauty mark, which either has been airbrushed or made over in recent publicity photos.

"I used to be a counselor at a maximum-security detention home for boys fourteen to eigh-

teen with charges ranging from murder to purse snatching. So I had to learn to relate to them not like a preacher but more like a big brother—or a cool uncle."

—Guru on Gang Stan's grassroots approach to their audience. (Billboard)

"Rule of thumb: If you can see the Empire State Building, we can see you."

—Richard J. Pollack, traffic-camera controller, on the wide range of surveillance cameras that are proliferating across New York City.

"Country music is just a sound. If you can close your eyes and not hear black or white, then the artist making the sound can sing country."

—Venita Lewis, founder of the Nashville-based Minority Country Music Association. The group, which supports minority country music artists, is comprised of black, Asian, and Native American members, as well as one white singer who considers himself a minority because he's overweight. (Billboard)

"Blacks and some Hispanic Americans have a puzzling, additional risk factor that makes them much more susceptible than whites to Alzheimer's disease..."

—An analysis from a national survey on the illness, pooled from more than 1,000 elderly men and women. The reasons for the higher rates are still unknown. An estimated four million Americans have Alzheimer's, and 100,000 die from the disease every year. (New York Times)

from the
VIBE Vault
NOVEMBER 1994

"I always wanted a little brother, and God blessed me with Usher. He was the only little nigga who was able to hang with the big kids."

—Sean "Puffy" Combs, one year after hooking up with the R&B star.

editor's choice

"Maybe [Duke] Ellington came to have a vision of God as being one who is an improviser, rather than being omnipotent, like the role of the classical composer. Jazz conception of composition; a jazz conception of God."

—Eric Nisenson in his recent *Blue: The Murder of Jazz* (St. Martin's).



Called home lately?

1-800-COLLECT®

FREE SPIRIT
MAURICE HALL



www.FreeSpiritJeans.com



FREE SPIRIT JEANS

GO AHEAD, TRY THEM ON.

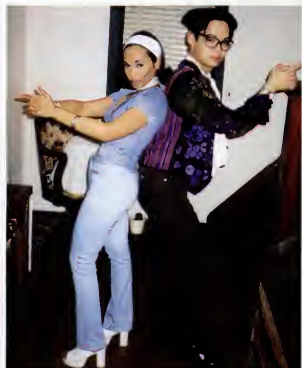
Easy Fit

888.451.9028

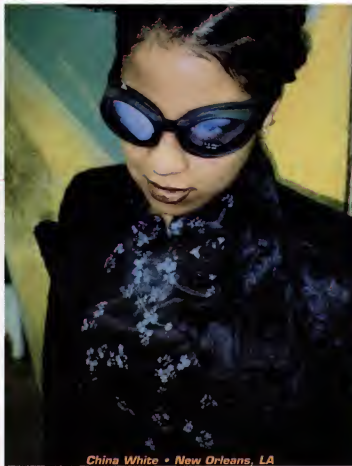
Flared

What's Your Flavor?

**OUR FIRST TWO WINNERS' FLAVOR IS ALL THAT
AND A BOTTLE OF MINUTE MAID.**



Lisa Manimbla & Kwoc Lu • Rochester, NY



China White • New Orleans, LA



YOU COULD BE NEXT!

©1998 The Coca-Cola Company. "Minute Maid" is a registered trademark of The Coca-Cola Company.

here's what i pick



What's Your Flavor?™



©1998 The Coca-Cola Company. "Minute Maid" is a registered trademark of The Coca-Cola Company. The bottle design and "What's Your Flavor?" are trademarks of The Coca-Cola Company.

A man and a woman are hiking on a rocky trail at sunset. The woman is on the left, wearing a yellow tank top and shorts, with a backpack. The man is on the right, wearing a brown shirt and shorts, holding binoculars. They are both looking towards the right. The background shows a hilly landscape under a warm, orange sky.

If you're HIV+,

Being HIV+ isn't easy.

It's a daily challenge that can take all you've got. It helps to have an advantage — to lighten your load and keep you going. Federal healthcare guidelines now call for including a potent protease inhibitor as part of combination treatments to fight HIV. Consider these reasons to make the protease inhibitor CRIXIVAN the foundation of your treatment regimen. CRIXIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIXIVAN can help reduce the chance of illnesses and death associated with HIV. CRIXIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Some patients may not experience these effects. CRIXIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS.

New NIH research showed people taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections.

Recent year-long research conducted by the National Institutes of Health (Protocol ACTG 320) studied over 1,000 patients and confirmed results from another study.

The group of patients receiving CRIXIVAN along with 3TC and AZT achieved a reduction in deaths and AIDS-defining illnesses over those taking 3TC and AZT alone. This reduction was significant enough for the NIH to recommend the study be stopped, so that all participants could benefit from the findings. Because the study was ended early, there was insufficient data to determine the statistical impact of CRIXIVAN on survival.

CRIXIVAN in triple therapy continues to hold serum viral load down below the limit of detection at the one year mark.

In a separate, ongoing landmark study, over 90% of the 31 patients receiving CRIXIVAN, AZT, and 3TC reduced their HIV serum viral load below the limit of detection after 24 weeks (as measured by available tests; the virus may still be present in other organ systems).

Importantly, the limited number of patients who chose to stay with the study for longer periods of time maintained these results through the one year mark.

CRIXIVAN is generally well tolerated.

CRIXIVAN can be taken with a light meal or on an empty stomach. There are side effects associated with protease inhibitors in general and CRIXIVAN in particular. Some patients treated with CRIXIVAN may develop kidney stones. For some, this can lead to more severe kidney problems including kidney failure. Drinking at least 6 glasses of water each day may help reduce the chance of forming a kidney stone. Other side effects reported include rapid breakdown of red blood cells and liver problems. There are some common medications and AIDS-related medications you should not take with CRIXIVAN. Discuss all medications you are taking or plan to take with your doctor. As with other protease inhibitors, increased bleeding in some patients with hemophilia and increased blood sugar levels or diabetes have been reported. Please read the following page for detailed information on side effects and dosing.

CRIXIVAN may help you live a longer, healthier life.



CRIXIVAN is the number one choice of doctors.*

CRIXIVAN is prescribed for more patients than any other protease inhibitor. With this commitment to CRIXIVAN comes a commitment to product improvements and further research in the battle against HIV. CRIXIVAN is being studied in a broad range of patients and in many different combinations. Ask your doctor for the latest news and developments.

* IMS America; 3/96 - 2/98.

Focus on the rest of your life.

Learn all you can about HIV therapy. Talk with your doctor. Stay informed and stay the course. With viral load below the limit of detection and an increase in CD4 T-cells, it's easier to look forward to the future with confidence.

Please read the following page for more detailed information about CRIXIVAN.

**Remember to
ask your doctor
about CRIXIVAN.**

CRIXIVAN[®]
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules



MERCK

www.crixivan.com

Going the distance.

© 1998 Merck & Co., Inc.



CRIVAN[®] (indinavir sulfate) Capsules

Patient Information about CRIVAN[®] (KRIK-sih-van) for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection Generic name: Indinavir (n-DIH-nuh-veer) sulfate

Please read this information before you start taking CRIVAN. Also, you should read the information included with CRIVAN each time you receive your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss CRIVAN when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups. You should remain under a doctor's care when using CRIVAN and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is CRIVAN?

CRIVAN is an oral capsule used for the treatment of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). CRIVAN is a type of HIV drug called a protease (PRO) or anti-viral inhibitor.

How does CRIVAN work?

CRIVAN is a protease inhibitor that fights HIV. CRIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses associated with HIV. CRIVAN can also help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. CRIVAN may also help these effects in all patients. CRIVAN is usually prescribed with other anti-HIV drugs such as ZDV (also called AZT), 3TC, ddI, ddC, or d4T. CRIVAN works differently from these other anti-HIV drugs. Talk with your doctor about how you should take CRIVAN.

CRIVAN has been studied in adults. The safety and effectiveness of CRIVAN in children and adolescents have not been established.

How should I take CRIVAN?

There are six important things you must do to help you benefit from CRIVAN:

1. Take CRIVAN capsules every day as prescribed by your doctor. Continue taking CRIVAN unless your doctor tells you to stop. Take the exact amount of CRIVAN that your doctor tells you to take, right from the very start. To help make sure you will benefit from CRIVAN, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays." If you don't take CRIVAN as prescribed, the activity of CRIVAN may be reduced (like resistance).
2. Take CRIVAN capsules every 8 hours around the clock, every day. It may be easier to remember to take CRIVAN if you take it at the same time every day. If you have questions about when to take CRIVAN, your doctor or health care provider can help you decide what schedule works for you.
3. If you miss a dose by more than 2 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 2 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of CRIVAN at any one time.
4. Take CRIVAN with water. You should take CRIVAN with other beverages such as juice or non-fat milk, juice, coffee, or tea.
5. Heavily, take doses of CRIVAN without food but with water at least one hour before or two hours after a meal. Or you can take CRIVAN with a light meal. Examples of light meals include:
 - dry toast with jelly, juice, and coffee (with juice or non-fat milk and sugar if you want)
 - corn flakes with juice or non-fat milk and sugar

Do not take CRIVAN at the same time as any meals that are high in calories, fat, and protein (for example — a bacon and egg breakfast). When taken at the same time as CRIVAN, these foods can interfere with CRIVAN being absorbed into your bloodstream and may lessen its effect.

It is critical that you drink at least 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) throughout the day, every day. CRIVAN can cause kidney stones. Having enough fluids in your body should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (due to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Does CRIVAN cure HIV or AIDS?

CRIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS. People taking CRIVAN may still develop infections or other conditions associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important for you to remain under the care of a doctor. Although CRIVAN is not a cure for HIV or AIDS, CRIVAN can help reduce your chances of getting illnesses, including death, associated with HIV. CRIVAN may not have these effects in all patients.

Does CRIVAN reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

CRIVAN has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take CRIVAN?

Do not take CRIVAN if you have had a serious allergic reaction to CRIVAN or any of its components.

What other medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my doctor?

Talk to your doctor if:

- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while you are taking CRIVAN. We do not yet know how CRIVAN affects pregnant women or their developing babies.
- You are breast-feeding. You should stop breast-feeding if you are taking CRIVAN.
- Also talk to your doctor if you have:
 - Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease caused by cirrhosis.
 - Problems with your kidneys.
 - Diabetes.
 - Hemophilia.

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking or plan to take, including non-prescription medicines.

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep CRIVAN and all medicines out of the reach of children. If you suspect that more than the prescribed dose of this medicine has been taken, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

This provides a summary of information about CRIVAN. If you have any questions or concerns about either CRIVAN or HIV, talk to your doctor.

* Registered trademark of MERCK & CO., Inc. Copyright © MERCK & CO., Inc. 1996. All rights reserved.

** The brands listed are the registered trademarks of their respective owners and are not trademarks of Merck & Co., Inc.



©1996 Merck & Co., Inc. All rights reserved. 90-1431 (S) 05/97 DR

Can CRIVAN be taken with other medications?*

Drugs you should not take with CRIVAN:

- SELDINE[®] (fenclonidine)
- VERSED[®] (methotrexate)
- PROLISUD[®] (cisapride)
- RETROVIR[®] (zidovudine, ZDV also called AZT)
- TRIGEMIN[®] (gabapentin)
- DUFLACAN[®] (flucanazole)
- EPWIR[®] (fenofibrate, 3TC)
- BACTRIM[®]/SEPTIMA[®] (trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole)
- VIDEX[®] (didanosine, ddI) — If you take CRIVAN with VIDEX[®], take them at least one hour apart.
- MYCOBUTIN[®] (rifabutin) — If you take CRIVAN with MYCOBUTIN[®], your doctor may adjust both the dose of MYCOBUTIN and the dose of CRIVAN.
- NIZORAL[®] (ketoconazole) — If you take CRIVAN with NIZORAL[®], your doctor may adjust the dose of CRIVAN.

Drugs you should take with CRIVAN include:

- BAVON[®] (clonidine)
- laniclav (RPM)
- ORTHO-NOVUM 1/35[®] (oral contraceptive)
- ZERTIT[®] (stavudine, d4T)

What are the possible side effects of CRIVAN?

Like all prescription drugs, CRIVAN can cause side effects. The following is not a complete list of side effects reported with CRIVAN when taken either alone or with other anti-HIV drugs. Do not rely on this page alone for information about side effects. Your doctor can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects.

Some patients treated with CRIVAN developed kidney stones. In some of these patients this led to more severe kidney problems, including kidney failure or inflammation of the kidneys. Drinking at least 8-ounce glasses of liquid (preferably water) each day should help reduce the chances of forming a kidney stone. Call your doctor or other health care provider if you develop kidney pains (middle to lower stomach or back pain) or blood in the urine.

Some patients treated with CRIVAN have had rapid breakdown of red blood cells (hemolytic anemia) which in some cases was severe or resulted in death.

Some patients treated with CRIVAN have had liver problems including liver failure and death. Some patients have other illnesses or were taking other drugs. It is uncertain if CRIVAN caused these liver problems.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) have occurred in patients taking protease inhibitors. In some of these patients, this led to ketoacidosis, a serious condition caused by poorly controlled blood sugar. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors; others did not. Some patients required adjustments to their diabetes medication. Others needed new diabetes medication.

In some patients with hemophilia, increased bleeding has been reported.

Clinical Studies

Increases in bilirubin (one laboratory test of liver function) have been reported in approximately 10% of patients. Usually, this finding has not been associated with liver problems. However, on rare occasions, a patient may develop yellowing of the skin and/or eyes.

Side effects occurring in 2% or more of patients included: abdominal pain, fatigue or weakness, flank pain, feeling unwell, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, oral regurgitation, loss of appetite, dry mouth, back pain, headache, trouble sleeping, dizziness, taste changes, rash, upper respiratory infection, dry skin, and sore throat.

Swollen kidneys due to blocked urine flow occurred rarely.

Marketing Experience

Other side effects reported since CRIVAN has been marketed include: abdominal swelling; inflammation of the kidneys, increased fat appearing in areas such as the neck, abdomen, and back; change in skin color; severe skin reactions; hair loss; crystals in the urine; and allergic reactions.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual symptoms. If the condition persists or worsens, seek medical attention.

How should I store CRIVAN capsules?

- Keep CRIVAN capsules in the bottle they came in and at room temperature (59°F - 86°F).
- Keep CRIVAN capsules dry by leaving the small desiccant "pillow" in the bottle. Keep the bottle closed.



CRIVAN[®]
(indinavir sulfate)
Capsules

the VIBEspot

FROM COAST TO COAST, NO ONE THROWS A PARTY LIKE VIBE. PEEP THE PICTURES FROM OUR LATEST EVENTS.



Photo Credits: Frank Alamo (4,5); Steve Howard (3); Mark Phillips (4,5,6,7,8)

1. VIBE's biggest socialites: Fashion Advertising Director Mark Eckstrom, Beauty and Fragrance Manager Abigail Marcus and Fashion Director Emil Wilbekin chillin' at the CTFA Annual Meeting in Boca Raton, FL.

2. VIBE Sportswear Manager Matt Pressman, Maureen Zash, Rhodia's Phil Cottrell and Carol Howland after ripping-up the courts at CTFA.

3. LaRon Batchelor, Lorraine Hale, Philmore Anderson, VIBE Corporate Account Director Robin Gibson, DJ Alamo, Kainon Jasper, Kenny Burns and Derrick "D-Dot" Angelettie take a break from judging the Alizé Phat Trak contest entries.

4. VIBE Editor-in-Chief Danyel Smith and dancer/TV personality Big Les are all smiles at our Los Angeles party for Danyel at 360°.

5. Danyel Smith gets much love from her guests at our Los Angeles party.

6. Big Priority: VIBE West Coast Music Manager Marian Enslay poses with Priority Records' Tim Reid Jr., Dana Mason, Hope Penkala and Robert Redd.

7. Marian Enslay gives us a little West Coast flavor with MCA Records' Troy Marshall, MCA/Silas Records artist Keith Washington, Damu Mnume and Def Jam recording artist Richie Rich.

8. Virgin recording artist Bridgette McWilliams performs for our guests at 360°.



no helmet, no gloves,
Strap yourself into the all new Corolla and feel the power of its spirited 1.8-liter
no jumpsuit. but you can dream,
engine beneath you. You'll soon learn that performance is not a number on a gauge.
man, you can dream.

Rather, it's a state of mind. One which you don't visit nearly enough.



COROLLA



TOYOTA everyday

1800-GO-TOYOTA ♦ www.toyota.com

© 1997 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. Buckle Up! Do it for those who love you.



CANDY GIRL

Brandy's not "bubble-licious" ["Bubbling Brown Sugar," by Karen R. Good, April]! Her goody-two-shoes act makes me ill. And she showed little class dissing Countess Vaughn in VIBE. If Brandy's such a "grown-ass woman," she would've con-

fronted Vaughn privately. Countess is the reason *Moesha* is successful.

Demi Jones
University of Arkansas

Countess Vaughn is not the reason *Moesha*'s a success! I don't know who lied to her. Brandy is Moesha. Without her, there'd be no show. Countess is jealous. Brandy, keep ya head up and ignore negativity.

Lanae McCarty
Brooklyn, NY

Brandy's ugly comment about Countess Vaughn ("She [Countess] wakes up and looks at herself in the mirror and she gets disgusted") shows that Brandy is immature and insecure. Vaughn makes *Moesha* a success; she's the only reason I watch the show. Brandy's just being used by her name. She's not even a good actress!

April Thompson
Houston, TX

Why do people dis Brandy? This society's so screwed up,

people don't know what they want. If Brandy was always getting into trouble, people would still be bad-mouthing her. We should be happy someone's out there trying to be positive. Brandy's amazing. I hope she stays on the right path. We need more young stars like her.

Gene A. Wilson
Madison Heights, MI

What does Brandy mean when she says that she wasn't ready to play the role of Tisean in *Set It Off*? What's the point of acting? Isn't it to portray characters that aren't like you? I'm sure Jada Pinkett isn't out robbing banks! Please let Miss Goody Two-Shoes know there aren't too many roles for perfect people. Brandy needs to get

off her high horse and enter the real world. She tries too hard to be an angel!

Y.E.
Ingleswood, CA

If Foxy Brown, Janet Jackson, and Lil' Kim can flaunt their sexuality, Brandy should be able to flaunt her innocence.

M. Browne
Tulsa, OK

Brandy's definitely not what she seems. After her mother said, "I can sell my kids to the ocean, and the ocean would buy them," I felt like I'd been conned. And how does Karen Good feel about being called a liar when Countess appeared on the *Vibe* and said that Brandy had exaggerated? That's got to sting since Karen tried so hard to make Brandy look good.

Yvette
(via e-mail)
(Editor's note: Karen Good feels fine. Integrity, good reporting, and our vigilant Research department are on her side.)

Brandy's mother saying she can "sell" her kids makes her

no different from a crackhead who'll do the same thing.

Ijalu Fernandez
Philadelphia, PA

STRAIGHT-UP FOXY

My cover story in VIBE was very cool ("21st Century Foxx," by Kristal Brent Zook, March). Kristal was easy to talk to, and ever since I lap danced for her, I'm sure she's been dreaming about me every night! As far as the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP office calling *The Jamie Foxx Show* buffoonery, their criticism has made me a stronger person. But I was honored to receive the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actor in a Comedy Series for the show.

Jamie Foxx
Los Angeles, CA

SPRUNG

What's Jerry Springer ["Jerry's Kids," by Jeannine Amber, April] have in common with the heroes you've featured in the past, such as Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Maya Angelou, and Jimi Hendrix? Imagine how Dr. Woodson would feel know-

ing he was featured in the same magazine as Springer? In my city the *Jerry Springer Show* is on at a p.m., right after children get home from school! This show tells kids it's okay to solve problems with violence. In your May '97 memorial issue for B.I.G., you said, "The hip hop community must now come together and take responsibility for ourselves and each other...or risk self-destruction." What part do you play in this responsibility?

R. Lundstrom
Sacramento, CA

Props to VIBE for the *Jerry Springer* article. On the real, that talk show has no morals, but it is entertaining.

Harvey Jones
Springfield Gardens, NY

The *Jerry Springer Show* is about as believable as World Championship Wrestling! If it's really supposed to be authentic, why, then, are all the plots so similar? Someone always has a secret love to introduce to their main squeeze. The main squeeze then always breaks out and attacks the new lover. Of course, other family members show up and join the brawl. Are we so gullible that we'll really believe this mess?

Darryl Wellington
Savannah, GA

¡CANDELA!

I loved your feature on Marc Anthony ["Fuego, Fuego," by Amy Linden, April]. Many new Latin artists, including Anthony, can hold their own next to old school legends like Celia Cruz and Tito Puente. The older generation has had its say; fortunately, the Latin youth are now being heard.

Shiren "Dioi" Dos Santos
Toronto, Canada

LOVE LETTER

Big up, VIBE, for the extra-nice Stone Love photo spread ["Stone Love," by Walter Chin, V STYLE, April]. Walter Chin's photos were top-notch. What took



YOUR BEST SHOT

VALERIA L. JONES, COLLEGE PARK, GA.

Commando Mara took a drag
from her Kamel then addressed the troops.

*"Forget everything you ever knew about
Robots. This baby don't play
by the rules."*

RED KAMEL LIGHTS

11 mg. "tar", 0.8 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

No. 789

KAMELO



CIGARETTES



so long? Besides Boomshots and the occasional Next, there's virtually no mention of the reggae scene kickin' all over America, Canada, and Europe. Nonetheless, much love for the killer shoot, and I hope to see more yard vibes in the future.

Nat Mastick
Berkeley, CA

PSYCHED OUT

I read your article about my conversations with Suge Knight and Snoop Doggy Dogg ["Psychic Enemy," by Cristina Verán, April] and the derogative image of African-Americans in gangsta rap. I presented my opinion during the Congressional Senate Hearings on this very issue. IFVIBE can help change rap lyrics and eliminate explicit images of African-American women in videos, then I'll be the first to applaud you.

Dionne Warwick
Beverly Hills, CA



Who does Dionne Warwick think she is? C. DeLores Tucker? Hip hop has enough problems with Tipper Gore and Ms. Tucker. Gangsta rap needs to be protected from these crusaders. Ms. Warwick is obviously disgruntled and jealous of hip hop artists and their success.

Makolm Finley
Menard, IL

At first, I thought Ms. Warwick and C. DeLores Tucker were just old-fashioned windbags, but now I agree that too many rappers perpetuate negative stereotypes of women as money-hungry sex fiends. Don't they see that these stereotypes are just as bad as those that depict blacks as thieves and lazy welfare recipients?

Natasha Fagbemi
Washington, DC

Dionne Warwick made her arguments in the wrong forum. She spoke in front of a committee that would've liked nothing better than to shut her up. Can't she see that there are more effective ways to get young people's attention?

John E. Legans
Florence, CO

BAYOU BLUES

I can understand what the residents of Convent, Louisiana are going through ["Battle on the Bayou," by Melba Newsome, Power, April]. When a company wants to move to my hometown, it usually gets turned away. The government claims "our residents don't want you here"—but who does the government ask? The rich people. And what the rich say

concerned about their careers than who was with Biggie. He's gone and neither of them is with him now.

Sherrell
Tacoma, WA

Why would Lil' Kim want to leave Undeas and hurt Biggie's business if she's got so much love for him? She needs to grow up and learn that sometimes you have to work for people you don't like. Now, my girl Faith had her own money before Biggie. If she leaves Bad Boy, it won't matter, because everything her voice touches turns to gold.

E. Johnson
New York, NY

"At first I thought Dionne Warwick and C. DeLores Tucker were just old-fashioned windbags, but now I agree that too many rappers perpetuate negative stereotypes of women as money-hungry sex fiends."

goes. We need to take charge of our communities as a whole. If we don't, we'll accomplish nothing.

Jerald Jordan
Camden, AR

DIVADRAMA

Lil' Kim's a chickenhead ["All in the Family," by Denene Miller, Start, April]! She's been running around and calling herself Notorious K.I.M. and publicizing her affair with Biggie, but now she feels stupid because she's got to work for his wife. Plus, she's on the sister label to one of B.I.G.'s other mistresses, Charli Baltimore. Obviously, Lil' Kim's not the "No. 1 baller." Keep clucking, Kim.

Shakema W.
Brooklyn, NY

I feel Faith Evans's pain and admire her strength, but I don't agree with her that Puffy's running Biggie's name into the ground. She should thank Puffy for keeping Biggie's name alive. Applaud Combs for his dedication to his friend. Faith needs to get the chip off her shoulder, let go of the past, forgive, and move on.

Cheryl Coleman
Newark, DE

All the hype about Faith Evans and Lil' Kim is ridiculous. Their feud resembles a high school fight. Who cares if Kim was B.I.G.'s mistress? These two women should be more

DOGGY STYLE

Why would Snoop wait until the Titanic sank before jumping ship ["Exodus," by David Wielenga, Start, April]? What does he mean he wants "to go where it's all business and no violence"? Unless he plans to change his life and rap style, there's no such place for him. He should've used his canine senses and got out earlier. He wouldn't be caught up if he'd been all about business from the get-go. Snoop (of all people) should know that when you lie down with dogs, you come up with fleas.

Rosa Evangelista
Cleveland, OH

SIMPLY THE BEST

I loved the mini-Simpsons tribute ["D'oh, Yo...," by Amy Linden, Start, April]. It was refreshing to see VIBE recognize this clever and funny show. The Simpsons still stands out next to all the junk that's on TV. Matt Groening is a genius.

Tara Makki
Brooklyn, NY

HOT SHOTS

Some of the In the Mix [by Shani Saxon, Start, April] photographs shocked me and some of my coworkers who buy VIBE for their children. Photo No. 6 on page 48 should've been in *Playboy* rather than in VIBE. Whatever happened

MAIL

to the black dots they used to use to cover up things? And Photo No. 1 on page 50 was downright disgusting! In the future, please look before you shoot.

Robin Perkins
Minneapolis, MN

CHILLIN' VILLAIN

Mike Myers is talented, but the Best Villain award ["Oscars Schmokers," by Gary Daughin, April] should've gone to Aaron Eckhart, the chilling Chad in Neil LaBute's *In the Company of Men*, a tale about two corporate men who plot to wine and dine a deaf woman before kicking her to the curb.

Raena D. Coocann
Austin, TX

LETHAL MASE

In answer to Question No. 9 [20 Questions, April], no, Mase doesn't need to rap mo' faster! He gotta keep it comin' like a Power Master. Don't be tellin' him how fast to move his lips. Just watch yourself 'fore you fall from yo' trips. Y'all leave Mase alone—if he sexes like he raps, it's all good!

LaVonda Lee
Gatesville, TX

FIRM BELIEF

Let me break it down for Ms. Michelle Ana Maria [Mail, April]. America's population is 73 percent white, 12 percent black, 9 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent other. We need programs like affirmative action. Otherwise, it's mathematically impossible for minorities to have equal opportunity. If you oppose affirmative action, then you oppose equality and are walking backward. Get back in step!

Corry Burch
Tampa, FL

STORM



BUBBLE
LAZER

RAINBOW
LAZER

1.888.STORM.00

AVAILABLE AT FINE DEPARTMENT STORES, CHAIN STORES AND BETTER BOUTIQUES

In her letter, Michelle Ana Maria said, "We should be happy that [without affirmative action] we're finally able to prove we're as good as everyone else." It's amazing that minorities feel the need to prove they're as good as everyone else, even though they lack everyone else's opportunities. Blacks have proven themselves through slavery, the American Revolution, and the Civil War, but we're still fighting gallantly for our self-esteem. What more do we have to prove?

R. Masely
Melbourne, FL

'BOUT IT 'BOUT IT!

Paul Slider, where were you in 1997, Master P's year [Mail, April]? It seems you're mad that P was chosen as Artist of the Year, but if his shit wasn't selling, he wouldn't be in VIBE. Hip hop fans love them some Master P. I'm from the South, but people on both coasts bang P as much as I do. Down here it ain't about Jay-Z, Rakim, or Biggie because it's all about da P. How the hell you gonna stop a tank?

Ricky "Pimp" Roberts
San Antonio, TX

It seems that a new university's just opened for playa haters, and it's already given out *too many* P.H.D.'s. What's up with my man Paul Slider trying to hate on Master P? As long as people are buying P's music, he'll keep making 'em say *ughh!* For all you haters, I recommend Chris Rock's new book.

S. Sims
St. Louis, MO

AMERIKKA'S MOST

How dare you say Ice Cube should stop to acting ["A/B," Revolutions, March]? He's the most potent of all lyricists to ever grace the rap game. As a businessman, he capitalizes on the industry and still drops knowledge. The need to drop knowledge was the driving force behind the creation of hip hop. When Ice Cube held the reigns, he did it without precedent. If it wasn't for him, we'd be oblivious to the brothers who dazzle our eyes today.

Deniece Kimbrough
Gary, IN

How can you not love Mystikal's voice?! His style's the bomb because it's so *unique*. He can make you laugh and cry all at the same time with his Southside, New Orleans-based rhymes. Besides being an amazingly talented rap-

per, he's a Gulf War veteran and a former Grambling State University student.

Baby
Lena, LA

HUFFIN' N' PUFFIN'

I was so pissed at the trash written about Sean "Puffy" Combs [Mail, March]! Why do people criticize him when he's just doing what the majority of men *should* be doing? He works a full-time job and is emotionally and financially responsible for his son and pregnant girlfriend, Kim Porter. He's a great example of success and doesn't promote weed or guns. Puff, continue what you're doing. The people who love you outweigh the ignorant ones who don't!

Betty Theodore
Brooklyn, NY

FATHER FIGURE

My name is Allen Broughton, Allen Iverson's father. The story "Killer Crossover," by Jason Whitlock [February], was one-sided, without any proper investigation into the events and people involved. I'm very upset that my name was used without my knowledge for this ludicrous story. I'm especially upset about the lies written about me. Along with the other things I'm going through in my life, this story has caused me, my family, and my other kids deep stress, frustration, and pain. It has tarnished my reputation beyond repair within the community. I wish you'd gotten all of the truth before using my name in your story.

Allen Broughton
Hartford Correctional Center
Hartford, CT

(Editor's note: VIBE fully stands behind the story.)

Take the VIBE Challenge!

Tell us who the fiercest NEXT cultural icons are. Think: music, film, fashion, literature, art, television, politics. School us! Only the depest responses will be featured in the Mail section of a very special issue of VIBE. Can you handle it?

CORRECTIONS

*The photo on page 168 of the April issue was taken by Kevin Cummins/London Features.
*The caption for the picture on page 54 of the April issue should have read: Du Beth Coleman.

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE Mail, 215 Lexington Avenue, 8th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10018 (include your daytime phone number). Or send E-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (name address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Prior to submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.

Atlanta, GA
Athletic Appeal
Sports Profile
Walter's Clothing

Baltimore, MD
Downtown Locker Room
Shoe City

Chattanooga, TN
M & J Shoes

Chicago, IL - Metro Area
Cisco's
City Sports
Dream Town
G K Tops & Bottoms
Wesley Shoes
7 Days Sports Town

Cincinnati, OH
Cohen Shoes
Deveroes
McHahns Sportswear

Dallas, TX
Spare Time

Dayton, OH
Cohen Shoes
Deveroes
Step-N-Style

Detroit, MI
Imperial Sports
Mr. Alan's

Jackson, TN
Greg's

Las Vegas, NV
Shoes Express
Vegas Shoes

Little Rock, AR
Greg's

Los Angeles, CA - Metro Area
Ingleswood Sports
Center - Ingleswood
Walt Butler Sport
Shoes - Pasadena

Louisville, KY
Athletic Attic
Fashion Fever
In Style
Jay's Department Store

Memphis, TN - Metro Area
Bert's
Greg's
Marty's

Milwaukee, WI
Bouchard's
Sportswear & Shoes
Playmakers

Minneapolis, MN
Sports Dome

Mississippi Delta
Conerly Shoe Stores

New York, NY
Paragon Sporting Goods

Newark, NJ
Sneaker Joint
Stadium Footwear

Oakland, CA/East Bay
Kick-n-It
Mr. Cool Fashions

The Oranges, NJ
Sport Spot

Phoenix, AZ
Clothing City
Steven's Shoes

San Francisco, CA
Arya Footwear
Nabis

St. Louis, MO
Gus's Fashions

Washington, DC
Downtown Locker Room
Shoe City

Just for Feet - All locations

Athletic shoes
from back in the day
and today.



Classic™



Montenero™



Surf & Sand™

Y O U B E L O N G

CLUB  K-SWISS

Call 1-800-276-0536 for additional locations.
<http://www.kswiss.com>

© 1998 K-Swiss Inc. All rights reserved. K-Swiss, The K-Swiss Emblem, Classic, Surf & Sand and Montenero are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of K-Swiss Inc.

IT'S TIME



IT'S MGD
GENUINE DRA

FOR BEER D'OEUVRES.



MILLER TIME.

©1994 Miller Brewing Co., Milwaukee, WI

Ernest Dickerson
Filmmaker



**"GM helped me direct
my business
down a new road."**

"There's a big difference between shooting a movie in three months and shooting a 30-second TV commercial in a day or two. Some companies don't think a filmmaker has the discipline for such tight deadlines. So, when General Motors became one of my first commercial clients, I knew they were judging me by my talent and ability. That was important to me. And, of course, having GM commercials on my reel helped bring other clients my way.

The road to success can have its ups and downs, but it's great to have a company like GM help move me along."



General Motors®

TRADE MARK We Never Forget Who's Driving.

CHEVROLET • PONTIAC • OLDSMOBILE

Buick • CADILLAC • GMC

START

¡YO
QUIERO
TACO
BELL!



THE FUNKY BILINGUAL

Here go the number to my casa / If you in a rush / Then call me mañana / Whatever you need, girlfriend / I got the whole enchilada.

—Mase, "What You Want" (Bad Boy/Arista, 1997)

Mase's knowledge of menu Spanish may be a little less than impressive, but it does reflect one of the biggest demographic shifts in American history. In the next decade, Latinos are expected to surpass blacks as the nation's largest minority group, marking an important change in our conception of lingua franca.

Judging by the sounds of the nine-ochó, it seems as if hip hop's been peepin' the crystal ball. More than ever, Latino artists are spitting hits in the language of their lineage. Big Punisher's "Still Ain't a Playa" shouts out both Boricuas and morenas. Guesting on Da Cocoa Brovaz' "Spanish Harlem," Tony Touch and Hurricane G deliver bilingual lessons *del corazón*. "Esta Loca / Dame chocha," raps Noriega on "Mathematics," asking his "crazy" girlfriend to give him some, uh, affection. Even that gringo Puff Daddy wants to be the *papi chulo* to his "Señorita." And L.A.'s Chicano-oriented Power 106 gets a surprise on-air visit from a certain superstar who refers to himself as Snoop Doggy Perro.

Really, though, hip hop has always been about adoption and adaptation. Black and Latino communities have long shared, and sometimes battled for, space and

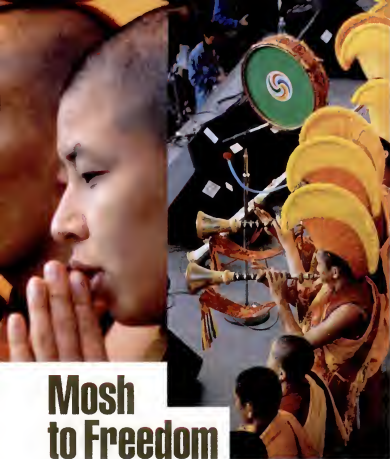
culture in those parts of the city that Downtown forgot. Heads such as Cypress Hill and Kid Frost been rhymin' in two tongues for years.

"Some folk today are preaching multiculturalism," notes Dr. Geneva Smitherman, author of *Takin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America*. "Rap is practicing it."

But not everyone is rushing to roll their *r's*. In California, a ballot initiative to eliminate the state's current bilingual education program has been receiving 75 percent support in recent polls. "[The study of bilingual education] is an academic field that's utter and complete garbage," says the proposal's key proponent, Ron Unz. Tapping into Cali's fervent anti-immigrant sentiment, Unz—a 36-year-old software millionaire who lost a bid to become governor in 1994—has resurrected his political life behind the rallying cry of "English for the children."

"Speak to me in a language I can hear," pleads Billy Corgan in the Smashing Pumpkins' 1995 hit "Thirty-Three." The irony is obvious. Corgan's language, rock, often seems oblivious to the language of the 21st Century—one more urban, diverse, and mutable than ever. That's why you can bet, if Darwin were alive today, his money would be on Mase, Puffy, and the variety of flavors held within that big enchilada known as hip hop. Because Harlem World sees the future: more adaptability, *más dinero, menos problemas*.

Correy Takahashi



Mosh to Freedom

When East meets West at the Tibetan Freedom Concerts, cultures clash for a cause

START



Woodstock Flashback: Busta Rhymes

I couldn't believe it when I first saw them slamming into each other like that," says Tibetan singer Yungchen Lhamo of the crowd at last summer's Tibetan Freedom Concert in New York City. "I thought they must have been crazy, but they seemed to be enjoying it."

For the past two years, Beastie Boys bassist Adam Yauch and his nonprofit organization, the Milarepa Fund, have put on weekend-long stadium-filled concerts designed to raise awareness of the Tibetan people's nonviolent struggle for self-determination against an occupying Chinese government. The annual events, which have raised more than \$1 million for the

cause, also serve as enlightening proof of the harmony to be found in contrast. Sweat suit-clad hip hop artists and scraggly haired rockers share a stage with troupes of Tibetan monks draped in traditional maroon and gold robes chanting Buddhist mantras. And though the concerts have introduced hundreds of thousands of pierced, tattooed American kids to the history and politics surrounding the Himalayan country's plight, they've shown the Tibetan participants a distinctively American form of celebrating nonviolence: the mosh pit.

"It appeared to be hazardous," says Geshe Lobsang, a monk from the Drepung Loseling monastery, of the elbow-first form of communion. "But the concert was marked by joy and freedom."

This year's installment—featuring, among others, Wyckd, R.E.M., A Tribe Called Quest, and of course, the Beastie Boys—hits RFK Stadium in Washington, D.C. on June 13 and 14. And you can bet that the absurd beauty of diversity will not be lost on the American performers.

"Tibetans are cool," says two-time TFC vet Big Markie, who brought a touch of music festival history to last year's show with his impersonation of Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock. "It was buggy out, though. You don't see monks and nuns every day."

Peter Spear

SOUND CHECK

Bobbito plays the tracks, Rosario Dawson states the facts

Rosario Dawson is like the cousin who you took bubble baths with when you were four years old...or your older sister who could beat the shit out of you...or that tomboy who the neighborhood kids regretted making fun of after she blossomed into a gorgeous woman. She sat in my apartment and listened to tunes I picked out; I felt like I'd known her all my life. Born and raised in New York, Rosario, 19, got her screen debut in Larry Clark's 1995 film *Kids*. This year, she stars in Spike Lee's *He Got Game*, which, in her own words, "Ray Allen's little chickenhead girlfriend with yellow nails. *Word is bond*."

• **Beatsnuts** — "Psycho Dwarf" (Relativity Records, 1993)

R.D.: *Eww!* He said "Dionne Warwick." *Ewww.* I used to love "That's What Friends Are For." But when she got on that *Psychic Friends Network*, she started to scare me. Whitney Houston probably thinks, *Damn*, my aunt has just flipped. I heard her name and got shook.

B: It was just a reference, part of a metaphor—you know, a rap lyric.

make these political songs and make them sound so beautiful.

B: You thought it was political?

R.D.: He's talking about this soldier who's murdering all these people; but, like, "I love you anyway, and you have a beautiful soul."

B: That completely went over my head.

R.D.: I saw this reggae show once, and the artist was talking about depressing stuff. But he sang it with so much soul and emotion that all you hear is the feeling. You can learn all the words to a song by heart and still not pick up the meaning. One day, it strikes you and you're like, *Damn*, that's dope.

B: This song reminds me of this girl I used to have a crush on. So—even though I'm over the crush—when I hear it, I get flushed with good-feeling, crush-induced adrenaline. I've never even listened to the lyrics.

R.D.: It means something different to you....That's why music is so beautiful. It's like a scent or a smell.

• **Rod Stewart** — "Passion" (Warner Bros., 1980)



R.D.: I know, dummy. I doubt they'd be giving her a shoutout!

B: To my homegirl, Dionne—what's up! You're buggy. When did you start listening to hip hop?

R.D.: Like, now. I have friends and all they listen to is Busta Rhymes. I'll learn all the words, and then people think, *She's into it*. But then they'll play something that I *should* know—like an old Eric B. & Rakim album—and I won't know it at all. I'm learning bit by bit.

• **Finley Quayle** — "Even After All" (Epic, 1997)

R.D.: It's amazing how they can

B: Why are you laughing?

R.D.: Shut up. I want to listen. It's Rod Stewart!

B: You finally guessed one right.

R.D.: He's a weird-looking guy. I saw this video, and he's wearing this tight leather outfit. And half of the song he sang with his butt to the audience—and he ain't got no butt! And his big hair! Then he turned around finally. And I don't know what he expected, like for the crowd to jump onstage or something. He had on a banana yellow outfit, and I was like, *What the fuck are you wearing?*

Research shows
excessively loud car stereos
are the number one
annoyance
to people over 40.

Whatever.

You can't hear them yelling at you anyway with your Prestige car stereo blasting away. But here's something you do want to hear. The new Prestige P-84 has an auto reverse tape deck, Dolby® NR, and controls for the optional trunk mountable P-1000 ten CD changer. And its built-in four channel 120 watt amp will put the over 40 set into cardiac arrest. Plus it has lots of cool options and a back lit LCD panel that makes all the functions easy to see. Hey, you have to keep at least one of your senses sharp. Give a listen to the whole line of high-end Prestige Audio at your nearest Prestige dealer. For more information, call Audiovox at 1-800-645-7750.



Fasten Your Eardrums

BRING DA RAWKUS

As major corporations feed rap to the mainstream, the success of independent labels like Rawkus Records proves there's room for grassroots growth on the banks

You know you've heard it on the radio. You know you've seen it in the video. Yet despite the propaganda, hip hop hasn't been entirely consumed by big corporations, champagne, caviar, and bubble baths. Inspect the imprint of aware-rap power trio Company Flow's 1996 self-released single "Info-Kill" (Official Records) and you'll find the iconoclastic spirit of today's hip hop vanguard in the hand-writers scrawl of a simple but charged slogan: Independent as Fuck.

Today, this credo thrives within the grooves of "indie labels"—the term refers only to companies that manufacture and distribute their own product, such as New York's Beyond Real, Fondle 'Em, Hydra, and Raw Shack, or California's ABB and Bomb. Such outfits provide a recording-industry status quo that often neglects both hip hop's street-based sounds and its progressive outer limits with critically acclaimed aesthetic alternatives.

At the forefront of the indie movement stands Manhattan's Rawkus Records. With a diverse artist roster that includes charismatic tradesmen Mos Def and Talib Kweli, space Cadillac cowboy Sir Menelik, as well as the anti-corporate snipers known as Company Flow, the two-year-old company holds a lightning grip on the Big Apple underground not seen since the early days of Def Jam.



Smokin' in the Boy's Room: Rawkus copresidents Brian Brater and Jarrett Myer



"On the business end, we're really based more on [the prototype of] a punk rock label," explains Rawkus copresident Jarrett Myer, who founded the label with partner Brian Brater and James Murdoch in 1996. "I used to just look at how [indie rock] labels like SST and Victory would put out tons of records. Our marketing philosophy is to keep putting twelve-inches in stores. If you keep showing people what's hot, they're eventually going to accept it."

Trusting their own taste has been key to the success of Rawkus's 12-person staff. Myer and Brater scout and sign talent themselves, and it wasn't until after the 1996 departure of the company's original A&R bigwig—current Refugee Camp All-star/Columbia Records recording artist John Forte—that the label's identity as preservationists of subterranean sounds began to solidify.

"I don't think any other label would have understood me," says former drum 'n' bass exponent Sir Menelik. Best known for his sci-fi rap appearances on Koolha's *Dr. Octagon* LP and subsequent Rawkus single, like "Cyclops 4000" and "So Intelligent," Menelik appreciates the

open-mindedness of his record execs. "I've always tried to be more creative than what hip hop is today. And I don't think anybody was as conscious of that as Rawkus."

The numbers bear out the wisdom of Rawkus' strategy. Averaging at least two hip hop releases per month (in addition to a growing dance/drum 'n' bass catalogue), the label boasts vinyl sales upward of 20–30,000 for a successful single like Mos Def's sublime, 1997 solo debut, "Universal Magnetic," and earlier this year broke 85,000 in combined sales of vinyl, cassette, and CD singles for Mos, Q-Tip, and Alkaholic Tash's "The Body Rock." Though not quite the 500,000 units that would earn Rawkus the Recording Industry Association of America's gold certification, such stats dwarf the 10,000 in sales that their new wave indie peers refer to as "ghetto gold."

Of course, hip hop has a long history of independent labels making good. The music's pioneer recordings were birthed at mom-and-pop operations like Englewood, New Jersey's Sugarhill and Harlem, U.S.A.'s Enjoy. Later, small New York-area companies such as B-Boy,

Cold Chillin', Next Plateau, Pop Art, Profile, and Wild Pitch composed rap's mainstream. During the mid- to late '80s golden era, these indies provided the first recording homes for seminal artists like Gang Starr, KRS-One, Salt-N-Pepa, and Marley Marl's multimediated rap collective, the Juice Crew.

Over the past two years, though, hip hop's booming popularity has brought major-label contracts and distribution deals to most of its star-level performers, often at the expense of New York's underground indie community. Hindered by inadequate distribution unable to keep up with the genre's growing national marketplace, independents such as Wild Pitch—once home to Gang Starr, O.C., and Main Source—jumped to joint-venture deals with majors like EMI, only to learn some hard lessons.

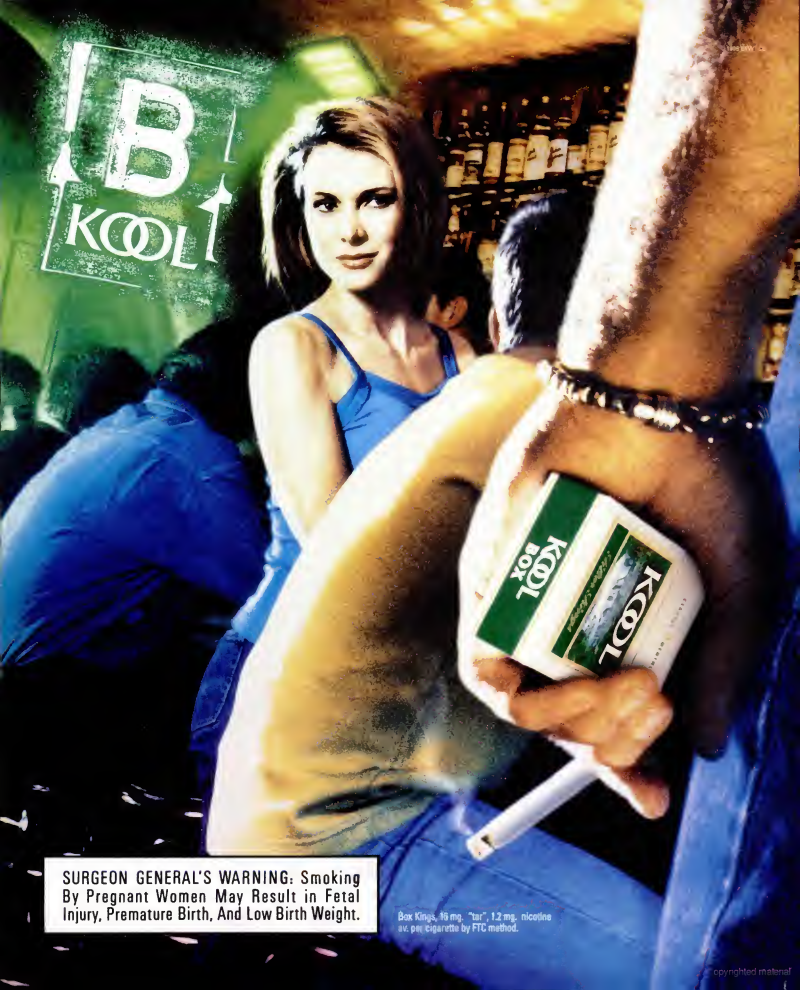
"Multiple layers of bullshit," says Wild Pitch president Stu Fine of his distribution ordeal. "It was very tough to adjust to working in a monopoly, dinosaur system. Decisions that we would make between 10:00 and 10:15 on a Monday morning would take weeks with EMI. And because they were funding us, they were

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking
By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal
Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.**

Box Kings, 16 mg. "tar", 1.2 mg. nicotine
av. per cigarette by FTC method.



NO
LOOK



!B!
KOOL

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

Box Kings, 16 mg. "tar", 1.2 mg. nicotine
av. per cigarette by FTC method.

painfully involved in those decisions. We did our deal in 1991 and probably regretted it before the ink was dry." (EMI North America has since folded. Today, Wild Pitch reissues its old records on its own.)

As New York's independents took lumps, so other regional scenes took jumps. Manufacturing their own vinyl and cassettes, and selling them out of the proverbial trunk, Californian "artist-preneurs" like Easy-E (Ruthless Records), Too Short (Dangerous Music) and E-40 (Sick Wid It) moved hundreds of thousands of units before touching down on major-label soil.

More recently, Louisiana's Percy "Master P" Miller has taken his No Limit Records from unknown independence to industry-empire status. With a distribution deal through Priority Records, P now has the power to sign other indies on as No Limit subsidiaries.

But as the recent demise of northern California's critically acclaimed SoleSides Records—once home to DJ Shadow, Blackalicious and Layrzz—indicates, the problems that hounded Wild Pitch in 1990 still exist eight years later.

"The disadvantages [of being independent] are funding, definitely, and lack of resources," says Layrzz's Lateef the Truth Speaker from his Oakland, California home. He, along with the rest of the SoleSides roster, has formed a new organization, now known as Qannum.

"I'ma tell you one thing about Rawkus, though," Sir Menelik exclaims enthusiastically, "they pay on time!"

And therein lies Rawkus's ace in the hole. Myer and Brater have a valuable ally in James Murdoch—son of media titan, Rupert.



Though the younger Murdoch reduced his involvement in Rawkus last year, the fledgling company's ability to pump out vital underground hip hop continues, ironically, via the loan-structure financial aid of Big Papa Murdoch's world-dominating conglomerate, News Corp.

"It's been quite a good relationship because [News Corp.] is known for saying out of people's faces on a creative level," says Brater. "The kind of relationship we have with them is something I don't believe we could have with a big record label."

Though Rawkus's rapid ascent has been impressive, the issue for the label now is balancing underground credibility with an expanding business plan. Will the buzz generated by album projects such as Company Flow's *Fahrenheit Plus* and the Lyrical Lounge compilation lead to a shift in focus away from the company's mo'-quality-mo'-quality M.O.? Or perhaps even a pact with the industry devil? Would Rawkus sign a major-label joint venture?

"Obviously, if a major label comes up to us and says, 'You can do it your way,' we're not gonna say no," says Brater. "But I guarantee that if we do make a change, the company will operate in exactly the same way. We'll probably put out twice as many twelve-inches."

"[Businesswise,] we're really trying to make this the real thing," Myer says. "It's not like we're trying to be martyrs. The artists don't have a desire to be underground as far as underground means 'not selling.' They just have a desire to make interesting records." *Chairman Mao*

Chairman's Choice

A monthly guide to the best independent record releases from VIBE's resident connoisseur

A few years back, a Virginian free-style wizard named **Mad Skillz** was wowing backpack wearers up and down the Eastern seaboard. But Richmond's finest vanished from the underground radar screen when his major-label debut, *From Where???* (1996, Big Beat/Atlantic Records), went nowhere. A Slick Rick homage, "Lick the Balls" (Eastern Conference, 212-946-5560) marks Skillz' triumphant return to the artistic netherworld. Avoiding typical remake pitfalls, the rhyme-savvy cavalier accentuates the agitation of a track that already possesses one of the greatest titles in music history. Knock-'em-out-the-box strategies continue on the even more confrontational flip, "The Conceited Bastard": "There's mad niggas that wanna see Mad Skillz slip / Yeah, you gonna see me slip / Past your ass with your bitch in my whip."

Darkhorse Queensbridge supergroup **Screwball** first sent pulse rates racing when their illmatic '96 debut single, "Screwed Up," asked the music question, "What the hell's a ball without the motherfucking screw?" And last year, MCs **Poet**, **Hostyle**, **KL**, and **Solo** pondered off-the-books bank on the Beatnuts' "Thinkin' Bout Cash" (Relativity Records). The fearsome foursome's latest, "Cookies-n-Cream" (Hydra Entertainment, 718-784-2003), addresses the subject of liquid assets via a hook that's all about the big puns. However, nothing compares to the superb B-side, "Beat'em on the Head (Remix)." Revamping an authentic hom-driven track (originally christened last fall by a solo, ready-to-die-hard Hostyle), the song's apocalyptic chorus neatly encapsulates this QB committee's urban woes: "It's time to beat 'em in the head / Code red / Nine-sev / Prosper and longev / May God forgive / All the sins / Strictly wins / Cause life's gettin' shorter / So keep ya heads above water." *Help! Screwball* need somebody.

You don't know the pain **Dilated Peoples** feel. Having toiled for years on Los Angeles' underground circuit (including an aborted '95 LP for Immortal Records/Epic), members **Is-Science** and **Evidence** resurfaced last year with an impressive three-sided single spearheaded by the eerie "Third Degree" featuring Defari. On their most recent triple crown, "Work the Angles" / "The Main Event" / "Triple



Virginia is for lovers? Mad Skillz (far left) and crew

Optics" (ABB Records, 510-419-0396), the duo receive the added boost of rugged, scratch-heavy production from Alchemist and Kool Keith accomplice Kut Masta Kurt. "The Main Event" maximizes gummy pleasure with lines like "Most kids got wack songs with high-tech videos / They know they ain't right that's why the screens turn left."

There's enough to lament about New Jersey without contemplating its maligned, lost-in-the-shadow-of-the-Apple hip hop legacy. But in the most exciting Garden State development since the arrival of Keith Van Horn's trifecta stroke, Jersey City trio **Mood Swingers** deliver a debut, "The Blessin'" (Raw Shack Productions, 718-230-1233), that lives up to its lofty title with divine style. Couplets like "You can drink my goose juice or you can bring it to me / Rhymes fat like Fat Albert, but I walk cool like Rudy" get the fluids flowing, but it's a sublime, Premier-esque jazz scat-cum-space synth beat minimalist that causes this ditty to rock from a.m. to p.m. and way past the fuckin' dawn. Warning: the Surgeon General of Chitlown has declared the preceding to be devastating to your ear. Buy two copies and see hip hop again in the morning. *Chairman Mao*

Please send independent 12-inch wax to Chairman Mao, c/o VIBE, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Sticks and Stones...

C-Bo's lyrics land him in jail

On March 3, Shawn "C-Bo" Thomas, 26, was arrested at his Sacramento home and jailed for violating parole. A former gang member who has recorded with 2Pac and Master P, C-Bo was released from Soledad prison last June, after having served 15 months for the illegal use of a firearm during a 1993 incident in which one person died.

This time, he recorded an album containing lyrics that apparently offended the folks at the State of California Department of Corrections. They charge that the February 24 release of C-Bo's sixth

cause célèbre. Although prisoners and parolees frequently lose constitutional rights—being locked up in a jail cell, for example—losing the right to write is a different matter.

"It's no different than putting him back in jail because he wrote a novel in which people who were in gangs were portrayed favorably," says prominent First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams from his New York home. "What was wrong with this effort is that they were not going after a statement made to some friends, urging them to break the law. They



C-Bo will not watch his tongue

album, *Til' My Casket Drops* (Awol/Noo Trybe Records), qualifies as "behavior which promotes the gang lifestyle, criminal behavior and/or violence against law enforcement"—a parole agreement no-no.

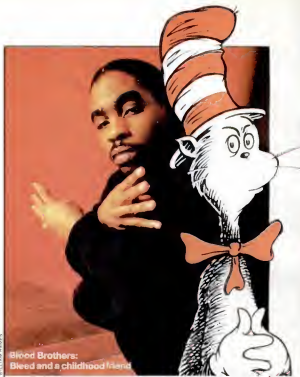
"I don't see how they can take my freedom of speech," C-Bo said to the *Los Angeles Times* nearly two weeks before his arrest.

Although the charges relating to C-Bo's lyrics were dismissed days later in a deal made by his lawyers and the California Board of Prison Terms, C-Bo tested positive for marijuana during processing and, as a result, will stay locked down in a California state prison (according to his attorney, he may be released in early May). His original parole agreement, though, and the actions taken against him have become a freedom-of-speech

were attacking the lyrics of an artistic work directed at the public as a whole, and that does implicate directly First Amendment interests."

The lyrics in question include those from "Deadly Game," a song about California's "Three strikes and you're out" rule for repeat offenders: "You better swing, batter, batter swing / 'Cause once you get your third felony / Yeah, fifty years you gotta bring / It's a deadly game of baseball / So when they try to pull you over, shoot 'em in the face, y'all."

As 2 Live Crew and N.W.A. have learned in the past, censorship controversies often turn into sales bonanzas. Sure enough, the week after C-Bo's arrest, *Til' My Casket Drops* debuted at No. 4 on *Billboard*'s R&B album sales charts. Talk about "promoting the gang lifestyle." *Jonathan Lessor*



The Cat With the Gat

Who inspired Young Bleed's rhyme style? The Diggy-diggy Doctor, that's who

My mom used to read me Dr. Seuss [Theodor Seuss Geisel] books," says Young Bleed. "The books came with rhymes and riddles. I picked up on it as a baby, and as I grew up, I kinda got into poetry." These days, the Baton Rouge, Louisiana native verbalizes his verse for Master P's southern juggernaut, No Limit Records. Bleed's gold debut, *All I Have in This World, Are ... "My Balls and My Word"*, came out in January and quickly established him as the finest wordsmith in P's stable. But are there still hints of Seuss's nursery rhymes in Bleed's graphic tales of street glory? Listen close, now.... You can hear 'em.

SEUSS

*On the extraordinary island of Salsima-Sand: Yertle the Turtle was king of the pond.
—Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories (1960)*

*I would not eat them here or there / I would not eat them anywhere / I would not eat green eggs and ham / I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.
—Green Eggs and Ham (1960)*

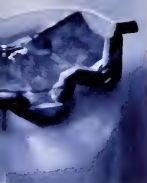
*Butterfly said, "No! No! No! Make that: stop song! / Tilt that Cat in the Hat / You do NOT want to play / He should not be here / He should not be about / He should not be here / When your world is out!"
—The Cat in the Hat (1957)*

BLEED

*I'm from a town called Freshkill: your-until-fuckin'-over / Steady muddin' to da gabfest.
—"The Day I Make Me Boss"*

*Out to lunch /ore brunch / Mugg got don't march in perpendicular / Art of money manslaughter / I'll write the shit on script for ya.
—"Keep It Real"*

*I ride from spots to spots / Seeing an chicken / my ball / I'm everywhere you go / They gotta play a hat / eggs, man.
—"La Poppa Got a Brand New Bag"*



MALACCA MAJESTY



FIND SOME FRIENDS, A WEEKEND AWAY FROM WORK, YOUR OWN KINGDOM
IN THE SAND AND A BOTTLE OF MELLOW TANQUERAY MALACCA GIN. BLEND THE
REFRESHINGLY MELLOW MALACCA WITH YOUR CHOICE OF FASCINATING FRIENDS
AND LUSCIOUS FOOD. GENTLY ROLL IN THE FACT THAT YOU WON'T HAVE TO
THINK ABOUT WORK UNTIL MONDAY. LAY BACK AND ENJOY.

MALACCA *by Tanqueray*

A NEW WAY TO GIN



© 2011 Tanqueray, Inc. All rights reserved. Tanqueray is a registered trademark of Tanqueray, Inc.

Imported by Tanqueray, Inc.

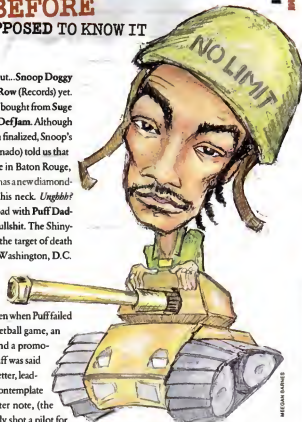
VIBE confidential

EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW

BEFORE
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO KNOW IT

You didn't hear it from us, but... Snoop Doggy Dogg may escape from *Death Row* (Records) yet. His contract is apparently being bought from Suge by either Priority, No Limit, or Def Jam. Although the Row says the deal hasn't been finalized, Snoop's Daddy Dadd (a.k.a. Vernell Varnado) told us that his son recently bought a house in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—and we heard Snoop has a new diamond-studded tank pendant around his neck. *Unghhh!* ...Word has it that life on the road with Puff Daddy hasn't been all parties and bullshit. The Shiny-suited Sampler was apparently the target of death threats during the early spring, Washington, D.C. stop of his *No Way Out* tour.

According to industry locals and tour staff, threats were phoned in to a D.C. radio station, and then when Puff failed to show up for a celebrity basketball game, an angry mob trashed the court and a promotional van. Back at the hotel, Puff was said to have received a bomb-threat letter, leading at least one tour member to contemplate abandoning ship... On a lighter note, (the increasingly less) Fat Joe recently shot a pilot for MTV called *World Famous*. Let's hope the sitcom, which stars Joey Crack as a nightclub owner and is produced by John Rifkin (brother of Loud Records' head Steve Rifkin), will fare better than the painfully bad *Jenny McCarthy Show* and *Apartment 2F*....Good news? In response to overwhelming public demand for more Marlon, Tito, Randy, Jermaine, Jackie, and Michael, the Jacksons are headed back to the studio one mo' gain. The album, to be released on MJJ/A&M, is titled *J's*. Apparently the family still has trouble with direction. ...Wyclef Jean is playing the management game with Canibus. And he recently finished producing the legendary Earth, Wind & Fire as they lent their voices to Sunz of Man's forthcoming version of the 1975 classic "Shining Star," which will also feature Ol' Dirty Bastard....Another legend, Slick Rick, is working on an album for Def Jam, and while VC is still heartbroken over Big Daddy Kane's comeback fiasco, Rick's producer, the



MELOAN DANCE

superconfident Clark Kent, assures us that we won't be mad. We shall see....Talented actress/queen of the grand exit Jennifer "Bootylicious" Lopez apparently knows how to use what she's got to get what she wants. Recently romantically linked to Sony chief Tommy "the Cocoon" Mottola—and soulful—Lopez has a fat deal on Sony/WORX and an album on the way....I love it in the air, Brandy and Wanya are no longer breathing it. They've supposedly broken up—but not lil' bro Ray J. and his boo, Irish of 702. *Awwww...* VC has learned that Brandy's mom/manager, Sonja Norwood, has joined megamanager Benny Medina (who's got his hands full with Puffy but recently lost Will Smith) in handling Mase's affairs. Can *Harlem Street Blues* or *The Mason Betha Show* be far behind? We heard that Brandy and Mase are thick as thieves, and with that pesky Wanya out the way now, hummm....But then again, this is all off the record, strictly on the Q.T., and of course, *very hush hush*.

VIBE'S ILLUMINATI WATCH Tony Robbins

His features are chiseled. His teeth are perfectly straight and square. And shiny, shiny white. His eyes don't blink. He smiles a smile so wide, so self-assuredly, and so insanely, impossibly, *inhumanly* happy, that you just know something is not right on your television screen. It's creepy, really. Late at night, peering out of those omnipresent infomercial pitching his business seminars, his books, and his self-improvement audio series, *Personal Power*, Tony Robbins looks like he's got a mouthful of ivory grave-stones, freshly polished and glinting in the sun.

Who would ever follow such a man? A man with death-cult prophesy written all over his Ken-doll face. Who would go to him for advice (the gist of which seems to be, *Think positively! Envision success! Go for it!*)?

Well, here's a deeply frightening list of folks who've undergone personal sessions with Robbins and his Life Mastery Skills: President Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Andre Agassi, daytime talk show host Lesza Gibbons... all the world's most powerful power brokers, all converts to Tony Robbins's mysterious plan for empowerment—all of them unwitting pawns in a vast chess game quite obvi-



Lord, help us!
Tony Robbins

ously controlled by the Secret Order of the Illuminati.

Whether or not Robbins is a cogent agent of the Bavarian Brotherhood (he may actually be a cyborg specially programmed to charm and sway political leaders and entertainment icons, but that's a separate arm of the Illuminati Watch investigation), his late-night lessons have infiltrated the masses as well. He has sold more than 25 million copies of his motivational series, and his company rakes in more than \$50 million a year. This is a man who, earlier this year, admitted to Larry King that he spent two years employed by the CIA "going through top-security clearance." This is a man who can keep some horrible secrets from the public. This is a wolf in a well-tailored business suit.

My what big teeth Tony has....All the better to eat us with, freedom lovers. David Bry

*Uh, Red?
Where's my body?*

*Couldn't afford it, Yellow.
Remember?
We're giving away
\$2,000,000.*



The Official Candy of the New Millennium™ presents the Official Game of the New Millennium. Just find the bag of all red Millennium "M&M's" (☞ designed by you-know-who), and you may have the winning wrapper worth \$2,000,000. Then you're rich, and Yellow's out-of-body experience continues indefinitely.



www.m-ms.com

Must have winning game message on wrapper to claim prize. No purchase necessary. See official rules in/on specially marked packages of "M&M's" chocolate candies. Open to US residents incl. PR & USVI. For free official rules/game message, send SASE to: Requests, P.O. Box 5237, Blair, NE 68009-5237. Must be received by 12/4/98. 1 request per envelope. WA/VT residents may omit return postage. Game ends 12/30/98. Void where prohibited. Grand prize awarded as 20-year annuity of \$100,000/yr w/o interest. © Mars, Incorporated 1998

Going, Going, Gone?

No more *YO! MTV Raps*? No rap satellite channel? Will hip hop fans still want their MTV?

It burst onto the airwaves as the golden child. Then it was shuffled from place to place like a foster child. Now, *YO! MTV Raps* has received the ultimate stepchild treatment: MTV's only real hip hop show is being yanked off the air. And according to an MTV programming executive, this time it's for good.

"They're not saying *YO! is canceled*," says the exec of the MTV brass, "but that it's on *permanent hiatus*."

The official word from the network is that the show will return in June with "a higher profile," and that recent moves are no cause for alarm. "YO's going on hiatus has absolutely nothing to do with MTV's commitment to hip hop," says Tina Exarhos, MTV's vice president of commu-

nications. "We're just looking for ways to update and retool. As for MTV's commitment to hip hop, just look at our playlists." Indeed, for the week ending March 29, 1998, five out of MTV's Top 10 most played videos were rap songs.

Even so, at MTV headquarters, some folks are fearing for the future. According to VIBE sources, *YO! MTV Raps* "hiatus" (permanent) or otherwise) came as a total surprise, even to the show's staff. "No one knew," says an MTV programming executive. "Not even the staff that programs the show—until they looked at the schedule."

Does MTV's future save screen time for artists like Lord Tariq & Peter Gunz?

Premiering in August 1988 as the brainchild of producer Ted Demme, *YO! Raps* counted new acts to an audience that reached nearly 50 million American households by 1990. The weekly, hour-

long version of the show, hosted by hip hop elder statesman Fab 5 Freddy, roamed the globe from Kingston to Tokyo in search of flavor. Meanwhile, the daily half-hour, in-studio version, hosted by two previously unknown jockeys named Ed Lover and Doctor Dre, featured everything from live freestyles to Ed Lover's saying, KRS-One's nose looked like "a two-car garage."

Josh Tyranigel, a former producer for MTV News (and former VIBE staffer), remembers the halcyon days. "[MTV executives] trusted Ted and

grew more than any other genre's (10.1 percent, up from 8.9 percent in 1996).

"MTV underestimates America's love of hip hop," says the programming executive.

They don't know that the majority of kids helping hip hop records go platinum are the white kids they so desire. MTV's looking to revive rock. They really want another *Smashing Pumpkins* right now."

"There's a refusal to admit that hip hop has crossed over," says Tyranigel. "Despite what the charts say, despite the fact that demographics continue to show that more white

play? And the kids who like hip hop, can they really afford a satellite?"

Asked whether MTV thought that way, Exarhos says, "Ridiculous." She added that she couldn't comment on the Suite since it's still in the planning process.

The myth that advertisers are afraid of the ghetto may help explain MTV's stance. "That's what they say around here, that advertisers are still scared of hip hop," says the programmer. "They still associate it with C. DeLores Tucker and Bob Dole or whomever."

But in an age when mainstream commercial icons such as the Pillsbury dough-boy bust rhymes on television, and Spite says Nas for endorsement, that excuse is hard for some to swallow. "Hip hop is just



people are buying hip hop than black people. They just refuse to admit it. A lot of the people who are currently running things at MTV are the last remaining infants in the music business who can remember a time before hip hop was a given. They don't get it, and they don't care."

"Ludicrous," says Exarhos. "The people who program our channel are young, active music lovers."

MTV also has decided *not* to devote one of its seven new formatted satellite channels, the Suite, to hip hop—though genres like rock and country will get exclusive treatment. Says the programming executive: "There was a meeting [discussing a proposed *MTV Raps* channel] wherein someone actually said, 'I guess Puffy and L.L. Cool J, but after that, who would we

one of the more flared-up symptoms of a greater disease," says Tyranigel. "It's not just hip hop, [MTV's] not breaking anything new. They cover it... I think they feel obliged to. But do they like it? No."

MTV is the biggest and, some might say, best music network on the planet—in fact, as VIBE went to press, MTV had just signed a deal with Biz Enterprises to launch MTV Russia—so it probably isn't going anywhere for a while. But when it comes to rap—even if *YO! MTV Raps* does get reinstated—the opening montage of its latest incarnation showed how far the once cutting-edge network had fallen. As generic beats splattered in the background, a collage of tired hip hop clichés like "fresh" and "phat" flashed onto the screen. Irony intended? *J.J. McClary*

PIONEER

NOTHING CAN BE HEARD ABOVE SUCH HARD-HITTING BASS. "WHY?" HE SAID. PIONEER SUBWOOFERS USE AN ADVANCED COMPOSITE FOAM WAFER COME THAT'S STRONG BUT LIGHT, WITH A SEAMLESS CONE DESIGN. AND PIONEER AMPLIFIERS HAVE A HIGH-VOLT-INPUT CAPABILITY, WITH NO SHUTDOWN, SO FOR THE WATT, YOU GET BOOM THAT BEATS EVERY OTHER SOUND INTO SUBMISSION. "WHY?"

THE OFFICIAL END OF CONVERSATION.



FOR A MOMENT THEY THOUGHT
THEY HEARD SOMETHING OTHER THAN BASS.
THE MOMENT PASSED.



LIFE IN

1472

THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

BY MULTI-PLATINUM SUPERSTAR PRODUCER AND
SO SO DEF C.E.O.

JERMAINE DUPRI

CO-STARRING:

JAY-Z
SNOOP DOGG
TOO SHORT
MARIAH CAREY
MASE
DMX
R.O.C.

LIL' KIM
DA BRAT
NAS
SLICK RICK
USHER
KEITH SWEAT
EIGHT BALL

& MORE!

Executive Producer: Jermaine Dupri

Other Producers: DJ Premier, Deric "D-Dot" Angelettie, DJ Quick & Kanye West

PREMIERING JUNE 1998!!!



Take a Hit...www.sosodef.net

Produced and Distributed by Jermaine Dupri Inc. © 1998 So So Def Inc.

can't trick a

MECCA

CHICK

in action...

in danger...

in the city...

where the bad guys...
are girls...



mecca

PRESENTS

JULIE C. TINY TRACIE K. WARFIELD BOBBY DEVON and **WILLIE STAR**

A TEAM MECCA PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY MIKE ALESKO

MECCA USA available only at authorized dealers. For more information call: ph 253-872-4015

Email: Feedback@Meccausa.com Website: www.meccausa.com

If
YOU'VE
EVER
BEEN
SWEEP-
TAWAY

YOU
ALREADY
KNOW

THE
FEELING
of
COGNAC
HENNESSY

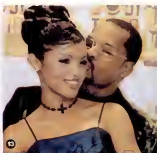

— Maison Fondateur —
1765
Hennessy
COGNAC

Enjoy Cognac Hennessy with good judgment.

IN THE MIX

And the Winner is...

START



1. Grammy week in New York meant glamorous parties and megastars. When Arista Records president Clive Davis threw his annual pre-Grammy shindig at the Plaza Hotel, Lauryn Hill and Mary J. Blige sang backup for Aretha. It was almost too good to be true. (2) Still the seemingly happy couple, Bobby Brown and Arista's golden girl, Whitney Houston, managed to stay out of trouble. (3) No matter what the outfit, Aretha Franklin will always be the woman. But a good stylist would make her just that much better. (4) Babyface and his momma, Barbara Edmonds, were also right there having a blast. (5) Since Arista distributes Bad Boy, it only made sense that Clive Davis gave Puffy love. Clive probably dreams about "It's All About the Benjamins." 6. Tommy Mottola and actress Jennifer Lopez attended the Grammy awards together. It just so happens that Lopez recently signed a multimillion-dollar recording contract with WORK, the label Tommy heads. Sound familiar? (7) How ya like her now? If Lil' Kim thought she had the weight of the world on her shoulders before, wait until she's had those brand-new breasts for a while. (8) Mrs. Jada Pinkett Smith took pregnancy to a whole new fierce level that night. 9. Wu-Tang are for the children! Of Dirty Bastard partied at the BMG after-party following his jaw-dropping speech during the Grammy telecast. 10. The *Soul Train* Awards took place in Los Angeles the same week as the Grammys. Malcolm-Jamal Warner showed the crowd his wacky tongue piercing. No matter what craziness he gets into, Malcolm will always be seen as a wholesome Cosby kid. (11) Erykah Badu, who won four statues that night, was kind enough to teach a little sister backstage how to use her Barbie camera. (12) Damn. Da Brat and her mother, Nadine, look like they could be sisters. They played for the cameras backstage. (13) Kirk Franklin and his wife are extremely cute together. We wonder if he was thinking any ungodly thoughts at this moment.

Shari Saxon



WINSTON BOX

16 mg. "tar", 1.1 mg. nicotine
av. per cigarette by FTC method.

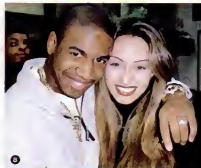
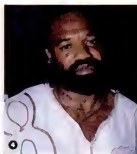
There are no additives in our tobacco.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking
By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal
Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

Taste. Some people just don't get it.



straight up



Ray-Ban

©1994 Bausch & Lomb Incorporated. All rights reserved. Ray-Ban and Ray-Ban are trademarks of Bausch & Lomb Incorporated.



GLARE PROTECTION



Outsidars™ W2757



HighStreet™ W2843

Authentic Ray-Ban glass lenses. Superior glare protection. Perfect for those who worship the sun. And those who shy away from it. Available at Sports Chalet, Lazarus, and Rich's. Also in prescription. For locations call 1-888-Go-4-RXRB



DEFINITELY RAY-BAN™

www.ray-ban.com

Soul vs. Self

For he has gone forth from the prison house itself to become king, although in the kingship of this one, he had been born as one of little means.

—Ecclesiastes 4:14

At approximately 9:30 a.m. on August 19, 1996, I stood before Judge Bell, who seemed intent on sending one more wise guy away before he retired. I pleaded guilty to assault in the first degree in the B section of New York State Supreme Court. Trying to find out if I was remorseful, the judge asked, "How do you plan to spend your time?" I calmly told him, I'm gonna free the slaves. Then I went to sleep for four months.

Nothing comes close to describing the state odor that reeked through every crevice of that wooden courthouse door, and don't even mention the gelatinous sliced meat, smashed together with warm wax-like cheese that they give away in triple layers. After three or four hours of lying in a bull pen of filth, brothers attacked those anthrax sandwiches like rats to raw meat. I hate jail—always have, always will. But if you can live there, you can make it anywhere.

An old friend named Marc Levin, an award-winning director for HBO who has always championed the silent stories of the underdog, contacted me before I went to sleep. He asked me if I was interested in working on a screenplay, with him and a few others, called *Siam*, based on my experiences in and out of the joint. It sounded okay when I was free to walk the Earth, but having to go back indoors took me out of the screenplay-fun mood. Still, we kept in touch by kite and the knife (letters and phone calls), him sneaking in pens so that I could write my monthly column—even a cover story for VIBE. It wasn't easy to ball from behind bars, but the more I read and wrote, the more freedom I enjoyed.

I entered the six building with about \$175. Within weeks, I had a grand! I earned enough money writing to keep the commissary comfortable for the rest of my bid. So I gave the slaves some treats—y'know, toothpaste and Tang, baby powder and cookies, all the necessities. By the second month, I had a box of business cards sent to the North Module of Rikers Island. I was parlaying with soon-to-be important people and got elected to the Inmate High Council, becoming one of only two non-affiliates who ran a house. Instead of relying on jail-house gangs for respect, I aided the brothers who were learning to read, helped them write letters, and spoke to them like men. "We will be fighting for the rest of our lives," I told my comrades, "but how we fight is the fight!" The real battle is the one that rages on inside us every day. One afternoon in the dirty drab dayroom, a song on the radio—"I Believe I Can Fly"—made every tough guy cry. That was one of the most powerful feelings I have ever experienced.

It's hard to be yourself in jail. Anyone who recognized me, I quickly pulled aside and told 'em I didn't want to be famous, because being famous in jail isn't healthy. If I was recognized for anything, then let it be for doing business with strangers as if they were brothers and with brothers as if they were strangers. Until the day I was released (January 1, 1997) to pursue my destiny, I was respected, well connected, and remained very well protected.

Along with all the other writing I did behind the brick walls of justice, somehow I managed to cowrite my first film. All those nights pretending to use the toilet, the back-cracking agony, and the risk of being caught with a sharp object were all worth it. I can truly say that volunteering to mop up piss and stool did wonders for soul and self. I developed patience as well as mastered the art of peace. I wasn't some big-shot writer. I was Bzo, the Intellectual

Zen Gangster, an inmate but by no means a prisoner, because I went in knowing an important truth: When freedom becomes outlawed, outlaws become free! Meaning: Freedom isn't out there in the yard, it's here inside the mind!

Shortly before my release, Marc came to the island to see me. He said, "We're thinking about casting Saul Williams [the 1997 Nuyorican Poetry Grand Slam winner] as the lead." That made me know that this project would have a certain glow, but I didn't realize yet that we'd rock the world.

After my release, Marc assembled a hand-picked squad from his new company, Offline Entertainment. Our producer, Henri M. Kessler, maxed out his Amex card to pay for equipment and transportation. The cast was on a shoestring budget of a few bucks per diem. Our challenge was to complete a film in seven days inside a county jail with lifers and COs as costars and extras. Finding a facility was difficult, but we chose the perfect city for filming a story about the kind of choices black men face in America, a place where locking up young brothers is business as usual—our nation's capital, Washington D.C. (Renamed Dodge City for theatrical purposes.)

The story revolves around Ray, a talented poet who's busted for sellin' smoke in the 'hood just as his supplier gets shot. A gang war ensues behind bars. He's right in the middle of it—and so am I. I chose to characterize Hophia, the prison gang leader, because of my past experience sitting down with high-ranking Nétas, Latin Kings, Muslims, and the Five Percenters. I knew how to wear "the Rep's Robe." Since Marion Barry knew how to wear a judge's robe, he played the magistrate who sentences Ray to jail. (That alone is gonna push your wig back, seeing the D.C. mayor send a young brother away on a drug rap!) Man, listen, we did our thing out there! I admit it was painful for me at times to be back in Bars and Stripes®, but this time I brought my own lunch.

Everywhere we went, our work was blessed. From the mayor's office to the mess hall—never did a problem arise that we couldn't handle. We went to economically impoverished places and brought a kind of tuff love that binds blood. I personally have never had a moment more shining than when I went back to jail as a character, cowriter, and creative consultant! The greatest feeling came at the end of the shoot. A brother came up to me and said, "When y'all are here, it's like we ain't in jail." We freed the souls of the slaves, if only for a while, and taught 'em: Maybe you can't stop the beef, but you can enjoy a measure of peace if you're a man of character, in the spirit of one, in its own time. We went from deadlines to headlines and stood frontline with Offline. And the winner is...? [To be continued] ☐



**After three or four
hours of lying in a bull
pen of filth, brothers
attacked those
anthrax sandwiches
like rats to raw meat.**

Tuph Street By Bönz Malone



*Miller Time*TM

FOR: Cautious people





universal organic soul





Phat Farm

CLASSIC AMERICAN FLAVA

The Classic Rugby
For Men

BROWNS FOCUS, LONDON
FRED SEGAL, LOS ANGELES
PHAT FARM, NEW YORK

©1998, Phat Farm, LLC
Visit Our Phat Farm Web Site: www.phatfarm.com



POWER SKINNIN' HEADS by Jonathan Franklin

Forty years ago, Detroit's Motown Records made history delivering "the sound of young America." Giants such as Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder were more than entertainers; they shaped American culture and even helped bridge the racial divide. But today, there's another record label in Detroit that's opposed to everything Motown stands for.

Since 1994, Resistance Records has distributed and promoted a soundtrack for white supremacy. Resistance fronts skinhead groups like Berserk and Nordic Thunder. You can buy the latest releases at skin-sponsored concerts, on the Internet, even at some alternative record stores. What are these bands preaching? The group Berserk chants: "Niggers just hit this side of town / Watch my property values go down / Bang/bang/watch them die / Watch those niggers drop like flies."

These groups don't just make records; they also perform live, though many clubs don't welcome them. Last November, members of the hate group Aryan Nation and executives from Resistance Records figured they could hold a fund-raiser and concert under the cover of the Thanksgiving holiday without making any news. The organizers chose a suburb of Detroit where they rented a Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. On a rainy November 29, the racists arrived to rock out to Max Resist & the Hoogloons, trade white-power band for Glory CDs, and network with American and Canadian neo-Nazi leaders. Instead, they were picketed and roughed up by

busted through and entered the party, but carloads of racists skipped the event when they saw the protest and the cops it had attracted. "We figured we pushed it as far as we could without starting to take major arrests," said 23-year-old ARA organizer Kieran, who, like most ARA members, keeps his identity a secret. Kieran calls himself an antiracist skinhead but looks more like a white frat boy in his Boston Bruins hockey jersey. "Even if we didn't shut it down one hundred percent, we definitely put them on notice."

"They tried to throw a couple of beer cans at us," says Stevie, a high school junior who says he acted in self-defense during the protest. As the son of a black mom and white dad ("Call me *muuuuuuulatto*," he says), Stevie is a frequent target for racists. He had his own reasons to protest the "white power" concert, but then they gave him the excuse he needed. "This big, ugly motherfucker type, he tried to run through us like a linebacker. I had a can of mace. I sprayed him right in the eyes. Then my friend"—he pauses to come up with an alias—"K'roq" hit him over the head with a Maglite."

The next day, when Stevie returned to high school, the gossip spread, and the story mutated until talk of Nazis, guns, cops, and ARA swirled through the school. Suddenly, his friends began to strut the halls with ARA T-shirts showing a fist smashing a swastika. Stevie is now a recruiter for ARA. When the call comes down from the Toronto or Minneapolis chapters that something's about

against organized fascists, neo-Nazi skinheads, and the Klan. Today, they're the largest nationwide youth group to mobilize against hate groups. They have a proven ability to whistle together 50-75 students every time the Klan or neo-Nazi thugs come to town. Last fall, when white supremacists organized a "Nordic Fest" in a forest in the upper Michigan peninsula, ARA members invaded the nearby National Cherry Festival and told the apologetic crowd what nobody wanted to hear: The Nazis were near. The ARA launched a full PR assault: Thousands of ARA newsmagazines and stickers were distributed. The group sold T-shirts with pictures of Hitler blowing his head off emblazoned with the message "Follow Your Leader."

If kinder, gentler measures don't work, ARA members use bottles, maces, fists, and boots to kick undesirable—especially Nazis or racist skinheads—way out of town. It's highly controversial—but also highly effective. When the KKK paraded in Fresno last January, carloads of activists ran convoys into town, harassed the racists, and shouted them down. In Memphis, ARA activists trying to prevent a Nansmen march on the spot where James Earl Ray killed Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. were gassed, beaten, and chased away by Memphis police. In Detroit, a neo-Nazi clubhouse "outed" by the local chapter of ARA became the target of two drive-by snipers.

Some ARA members acknowledge the danger in their



Anti-Racist Action has a solid history of beating hate groups

a group of teenagers who appeared out of nowhere, shouted them down, maced them, and disappeared into the rain. When the police later arrested and questioned three protesters, they confirmed that the sweaty, bawling action was the calling card of a group calling themselves Anti-Racist Action, or ARA.

NON-NONVIOLENCE

ARA is a quiet revolution involving thousands of antiracist youth in the Midwest, with bases in Chicago, Detroit, and Minneapolis. ARA has no president and no membership dues, but it does have a solid history of beating racist fascists—sometimes ideologically, sometimes literally. When organized hate groups gather at events like Resistance Records concerts, ARA members blockade the entrances or lobby the owner—anything to get the concert canceled.

On that freezing night last Thanksgiving, 80 ARA activists surrounded the entrance to the VFW hall for three hours. By night's end, a hundred or so neo-Nazis had

to go down, his Unity Crew pack up sleeping bags, bullhorns, mace, and hit the road to organize an in-your-face, get-out-of-town protest.

This isn't just about breaking up racist concerts. In Motown, ARA groups protest police brutality and the development plan for Downtown. When the Michigan Supreme Court ordered the release and retrial of two white police officers convicted of beating black motorist Malice Green to death with a police flashlight, ARA hit the streets to protest the cops' release.

When alternative record stores carry hate music by labels like Resistance, ARA "educates" the owner. "At first the store owners say it's about free speech," says One Love, a 46-year-old ARA organizer in Detroit. "But we tell them that it's about neo-Nazis organizing not only to take away your right to speak but your right to live."

CRUCIAL CONFLICTS

Since 1992, ARA has been on the front lines protesting

use of more aggressive strategies. "Violence isn't something you want to get addicted to," warns Kieran, who admits he "was attracted to the violence of ARA—for sure."

In its willingness to face off with the Klan and Aryan Nation, ARA has collided with the agendas of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and other traditional antihate groups. "I can certainly understand the rage of those who want to take physical action," says Donald Cohen, Michigan director for the ADL, which places a premium on cooperation with police, the FBI, and federal authorities at all levels. "But when it turns to violence? Challenging law enforcement? When they are trying to maintain a peaceful situation? I think it sends the wrong message."

Tony, a 22-year-old organizer with ARA Detroit, argues that ARA needs an aggressive public face to recruit youth. "A lot of these kids who get involved with Resistance Records don't know that there is any other outlet," says Tony, riffs giggling from all corners of his pierced face. "This is at least a safety valve. They can say, 'There is some-

thing else I can do; somebody else talked to me besides the goons." Asked what message he'd send to high schoolers who love the sound of breaking glass, Tony smiles and rubs the tattoo on his left wrist. "Break the right kind of glass."

THE SKIN I'M IN

Most people don't realize that the skinhead movement started in England in the late 1970s as a counteraction to the racist National Front. But in recent years, knucklehead white-powerskins have monopolized the public image of skinheadness. In much the same way, the image of ARA as a bunch of brawlers has lent them a kind of street credibility—but that was never the goal. Before the ARA was formed, Native American,

ARA News—a free zine—went out to 1,500 people. Last January the circulation was 55,000. During the same period of time, the number of ARA chapters across North America quadrupled to 102. There are probably about 2,000 core members across America, and if there

Records. Ska Against Racism, now completing a nationwide jaunt that features performances by the Blue Meanies, Mustard Plug, Five Iron Frenzy, and MU330, promises to bolster ARA's puny bank account and attract thousands of new members.

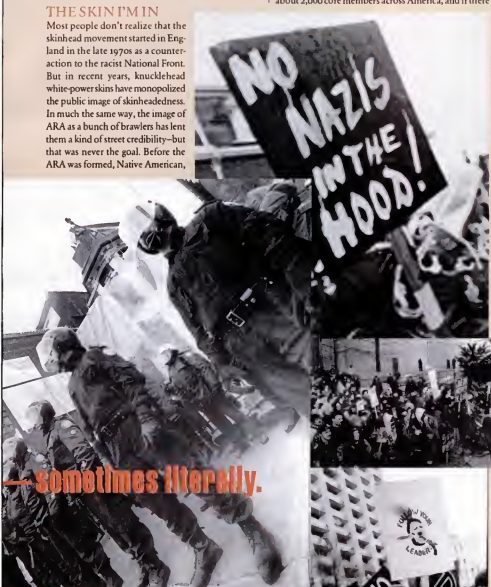
A chance meeting at a 1994 Lollapalooza show hooked ARA up with their plaid sugar daddies, the eight-man ska-punk ensemble the Mighty Mighty Bosstones. The group's lead man, Dicky Barrett, stopped by an ARA booth at Lollapalooza in Cleveland and chatted up the volunteers. "These guys told me they had actually been to Klan rallies and fucked them up," Barrett said in a recent between-shows telephone interview. "That impressed me. They are the type of people who have the nerve to brawl, but they don't show up to brawl." Now when the Bosstones play—last year they had an estimated 320 gigs—Barrett always points out the ARA literature table in the back of the club. "We have given them lots of money," he says.

Like the ARA, the Bosstones resort to action whenever necessary. When misguided neo-Nazi punks wander into their shows giving the Nazi stiff-arm salute, the concert stops, and the action begins. Barrett says he usually urges the intruder to get out before trouble starts, but Bosstones bassist Joe Gittleman doesn't always wait. German Nazis murdered several of Gittleman's relatives, so he has little tolerance of neo-Nazis. At one show in Florida, he flipped. "I never saw Joe move so quick," says Barrett, laughing as he recounts the now legendary bonk to a Nazi punk's shiny bald head. "Joe came off the stage; people kinda cleared. The guy was just as ballsy as he thought he was and kept his *Sig Heil* up." That's when Joe came down on the side of his head with an electric guitar. "In hindsight it probably wasn't the best idea, but it worked."

"There's not much need for fighting at this time, it's counterproductive," says Jim McNamara of ARA Columbus, who's been organizing youth since 1967. "Our work should now be political and educational, relating to people different than us, creating real interracial coalitions."

According to statistics from Pennsylvania (which thoroughly tracks hate crimes), two thirds of racially motivated violence is committed by youth under the age of 20. Thus, the best way to stop hate crimes is to organize young people. Positive peer pressure may sound like a soft approach to organize neo-Nazis, but underneath those boots and swatikas are sometimes lonely kids crying out for attention. When both parents work, millions of "virtual orphans" are ripe for recruitment into gangs, clubs, and secret societies of all extremes. "A lot of these kids haven't graduated from high school," says Tony of ARA Detroit. "The minute somebody will share a beer with them, they think, 'You're my buddy, you're cool with me. That is why we need to be there.'"

For more information on ARA, check its Web site: www.ara.net.org.

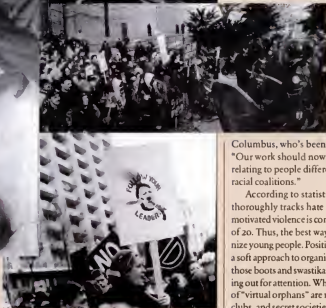


African, and white boys wanted to hang in Minneapolis without being harassed. A 16-year-old Native American graffiti artist known as Gator was instrumental in organizing what was then known as the Baldies, a skinhead crew that welcomed all races. The multiracial Baldies crew rumbled with the Nazi-oid White Knights gang—and won. Over time, they evolved into Anti-Racist Action, expanding their base and redefining their tactics along the way.

Just as the racist rock movement has grown (Resistance Records showed a profit for the first time in 1996), so too has the antiracist movement. Two years ago, the

isn't one near you yet, there probably will be soon.

Although racist music is part of the problem ARA is fighting, ARA has the support of a growing number of bands, from the New York ska group the Toasters to England's Chumbawamba. There's even a tour called Ska Against Racism, inspired by Britain's old Rock Against Racism shows, organized by Asian Man





2:00 PM, AUGUST 17, 1996

BUSTA RHYMES'

INSPIRATION FOR
"SO HARDCORE"



IT'S GOT TO BE
SMOOTH

Distillers



since 1857

Seagram's Extra Dry

Gin

*Distilled extra dry gin extra dry because of
Seagram's exclusive and original mellowing process*

DISTILLED BY

Joseph E. Seagram & Sons

LAWRENCEBURG, IND.

750 ML • ALC. 40% BY VOL (80 PROOF)

IN THE ANCIENT BOTTLE

100% NEUTRAL SPIRITS DISTILLED (FBI)

THE SMOOTH GIN IN THE BUMPY BOTTLE.

Those who appreciate quality
enjoy it responsibly.

next

PEOPLE
ON THE
EDGE

CAM'RON What, ju don't know?

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKEN SIMON

Even with three singles blazing on the radio, in the clubs, and on mix tapes, Cam'ron, 20, is faced with this harsh reality: He's still a new artist opening for Puff Daddy on his *No Way Out* tour; so his dressing room is the size of a closet. But that's no problem for this soon-to-be superstar. Cam is as comfortable doing his interview from a backstage bathroom as he is center stage in New York City's Madison Square Garden.

Born Cameron Giles, the Harlem-raised rapper started out playing basketball with neighborhood homie Mason "Mase" Betha. Together, they gained fame on playground courts against future pro players like Minnesota Timberwolves' Stephen Marbury and Washington Wizards' God Shammgod. But b-ball wasn't their only skill; Giles and Betha also made a name for themselves among underground rap fans as Jiller Cam and Murder Mase—the top-draft picks of Harlem's rap renaissance. After Mase joined Bad Boy, he made sure his man Cam met the right people. "He took me to B.I.G.'s house, and B.I.G.—God bless the dead—was working on *Life After Death*; so he had mad beats in his house. I rhymed to every beat he put on. That was my audition." Although B.I.G. never had the opportunity to sign Cam himself, his partner, Lance "Un" Rivera, made Cam'ron his first signee to Entertainment Records.

Cam'ron's singles, like "Pull It" (featuring DMX) and "Horse & Carriage" (featuring Mase), and "Magnum," the first release off the *Woo* soundtrack (Entertainment), show off his unvarnished, almost spoken-word delivery and easygoing flow. A star player on a team of talented new MCs (Canibus, Big Punisher, DMX) expected to blow up this year, Cam's ready to take home the trophy with his album, *Confessions of Fire*, due in June. Like the third-team All-American point guard he was in high school, Cam knows how to change up his style to divert the opposition.

"I could get on a song with Myaikal if I wanted to. That's the difference in my album. Everybody hears me on hardcore songs, and that's my favorite because I love doing them. But I got Jermaine Dupri on my album; Usher's on my album. Certain people can't do songs with people like that. Even if I got three verses on a song, all three verses will sound different. It takes time, but that's what's got to be done so I can keep your attention." Clearly, it's only a matter of time before Cam has his own tour, complete with a shiny platinum star on his dressing room door. *Tanya Pendleton*

NEXT

PEOPLE ON THE
VERGE

QUEEN ESTHER MARROW

God save the queen

Picture mid-afternoon sunlight piercing the stained-glass windows of a small Baptist church. A preacher mounts the pulpit, perspiration streaming from his dried-out S-curl to his oversized jowls. The choir, draped in tattered robes, sings and sways to the syncopated rhythm of a dilapidated organ, while overcome congregation members work themselves into a foot-stomping, arm-flailing frenzy.

But this isn't taking place in rural Louisiana. In fact, we're in a majestic East London theater, where Queen Esther Marrow and the Harlem Gospel Singers, an American gospel ensemble, have set up shop on their Western European tour. What began seven years ago as a bamstorming bus tour through Germany has blossomed into international success, with the group playing before audiences in sold-out theaters throughout Paris, Milan, and Barcelona. During a recent London engagement, they made thousands of Brits catch the Holy Ghost, performing a litany of songs ranging from traditional spirituals like "Soon I Will Be Done" to a gospel interpretation of Ketrine and the Waves' 1985 "Walking on Sunshine." The group hope to tour the United States soon and bless Stateside audiences with their captivating perfor-

mance, but until then, their hour-long concert CD, *Queen Esther Marrow: Live in Paris* (featuring the Harlem Gospel Singers) (Intershow Records), will have to suffice.

Although those folks on the other side of the Atlantic don't often get down like the old-timers at your grandmama's country church, they do seem to come away with some spiritual rejuvenation. During dinner at a trendy London restaurant, an ageless Queen Esther offers some insight: "[Over here,] they really appreciate African-American culture. They may not understand gospel, but the music and the energy from the show touches them because music is a universal message."

Queen Esther and her entourage have entertained the Pope as well as Britain's Royal Family. The Pope was so pleased with their performance at the Vatican that he invited them back for an encore a few months later—an honor that Bob Dylan, the Vatican's other invited performer, wasn't lucky enough to receive. "I looked down at [the Pope], and he was tapping his feet to the music," Esther recalls with a chuckle. Evidently, this queen's Holy Ghosts are contagious.

Todd E. Barbee

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK ROOGERS



Between her law courses and her responsibilities as Miss Black Houston, Sheila Jones is always moving. Luckily, her 140-horsepower Eclipse RS is designed to keep up with a fast-paced lifestyle.



Drivers have voted with their checkbooks, making the Eclipse more popular than the Acura Integra, Toyota Celica, Nissan 240SX and Honda Prelude.* Sorry, guys, we get the crown.



Press a button in the Eclipse Spyder GS-T, and the fully-lined power cloth top and glass rear window vanish. Switch on the 210-peak watt premium audio system. Adjust the leather-trimmed sport seat. And wave good-bye to the crowd.

Judged America's most popular import sport coupe.
(Would you want to drive a runner up?)

Is it any surprise that we blasted past the competition? The other import sport coupes can't match our 210-horsepower* turbo engine. Our available all-wheel drive. And our hard-core, haute-couture aerodynamics. Call us at 1-800-55MITSU to learn more. Or check out our web site at www.mitsucars.com Oh, by the way, we know the Eclipse flies, but we encourage you to keep your wheels on the ground. And please, wear your safety belt.



Eclipse coupe RS starts at \$15,740. Eclipse coupe GS-T shown MSRP \$21,960, plus \$435 destination/handling (Alaska \$540). Excludes tax, title, license, registration fee, dealer options and charges. Prices and vehicle availability may vary. Actual prices set by dealers. *Based upon Poll Company First Quarter 1998 Model Year new vehicle registrations. 1GS-T and GSX models only. 205 hp with automatic transmission.

NOREAGA

Guess who's coming to dinner?

PHOTOGRAPH BY TARYN SIMON

Amid the hungry hobnobbers gathered at Puffy's pretentiously plush Manhattan soul eatery, Justin's, Noreaga unapologetically sticks out like a .357 Magnum concealed in a freshly pressed pair of linens.

"Whut! Whut!" exclaims the 20-year-old Victor "Noreaga" Santiago. "It's the slogan I got everyone saying and feeling. It's like 'Whut!' 'Whatever!' That's the attitude I'm taking." And judging from Noreaga's recent rhyming blitz (including appearances on everything from the Firm's recent "I'm Leaving" to Big Punisher's debut album) and his upcoming solo album, *N.O.R.E.* (Penalty), that's a whole lot of attitude to check for.

"I never had a real job in my life until I signed to a record label," says the half-black/half-Puerto Rican native of Queens who got his first job on the street—running crack at age eight. His premature initiation into a life of crime eventually ended in '91 with an attempted murder conviction for shooting someone in Queens—right after seeing the movie *Juice*. During his three-and-a-half-year bid at Green Haven Correctional Facility, Noreaga befriended future CNN (Capone-N-Noreaga) rhyme partner Capone. "I was in a cell, and the only thing that kept

me moving was music," Noreaga says. "Hip hop is the thing that had me going in jail." After his release, he and Capone strong-armed their way onto the scene with their '96 indie single "LA LA" (the East Coast counterstrike to the Dogg Pound's "New York, New York") and their searing debut album of the same year, *The War Report* (Penalty).

"Norie is the closest thing to Tupac since he died," declares Lance "Un" Rivera, Untertainment Records mogul/hip hop impresario. "His perception of being a star is what the streets is lacking right now. He's coming across as the nigga that'll say, 'Yo, I don't give a fuck, my rhyme style and lyrics is for niggas on the street, and it ain't for nobody else.'"

And as if rhyming for his fellow street dwellers wasn't enough work, Norie has even helped carpet New York City with his self-designed promotional-sticker campaign. "I gotta lot of energy in me," says Noreaga, revealing the significance behind his acronymically titled solo album, *Niggas on the Run Eat'n*. "I feel like if I'ma be the rapper to come out from my 'hood, I'ma destroy it. I'm too hungry." Open wide, it's time to feast.

Durwin Chow

NO
PEOPLE
ON THE
VEIN

**AFRICAN
PRIDE®**
"Proud To Be The Original"®

Want your weave to look fabulous? Now it's easy with African Pride Wonder Weave, new products created exclusively for weave styles. Wonder Weave Conditioning Sheen Spray gives you dazzling shine, while Wonder Weave Moisturizing Styling Gel holds hair perfectly for a weave that looks gorgeous all day. Work that weave with an outfit like this one by Byron Lars and you're sure to have heads turning. And who doesn't want that?

I want that look

NEW!

For
Fabulous
Looking
Weaves



KEEP YOUR HEAD UP.



NEXT

PERFORMING ON THE
VIBE

Karen Clark-Sheard
Making a holy racket

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN B. MCBRIDE

Giving praise is in Karen Clark-Sheard's blood. The singer's father is a pastor; her mother, the late Dr. Mattie Moss-Clark, oversaw the music for the family's Pentecostal church. Under their guidance, Karen and her siblings, better known as the Clark Sisters, brought gospel music soaring into the day-glo '80s, paving the way for the new mass appeal of R&B—savvy faith espousers like the Winans and Kirk Franklin. "There are more secular and gospel artists coming together now," Clark-Sheard notes approvingly, calling from her home in Detroit. "I think that's a positive step because the music is becoming more open."

On her debut solo album, *Finally Karen* (Island Black Music), Clark-Sheard weaves contemporary soul and hip hop textures into a gospel tapestry with such success that it transcends the limitations of genre. Faith Evans, who appears on album highlight "Nothing Without You," says, "Karen's voice has inspired me to become a better singer. I'm so glad she's been exposed to the rest of the world."

But though her lilting soprano voice adapts effortlessly to a range of grooves, she shies away from the C-word. "I wouldn't say that I'm trying to cross over," she demurs. "I would say I'm trying to appeal to everybody." A mother of two, Clark-Sheard is also motivated by concern over the negative imagery in some of today's rap music. She prefers to see the genre used as a medium for spiritual empowerment. "That's one of the reasons I have a little hip hop on my album, because I know people are attracted to that."

As it turns out, both of Clark-Sheard's children already share their mother's music inclination. Her eight-year-old son, J. Drew Sheard, is a fledgling drummer, and her 10-year-old daughter, Kierra Sheard, seems destined to follow in the singer's footsteps. On *Finally Karen*, Karen and Kierra team up for a rousing live version of "The Will of God," a song that Karen performed with her mother as a youngster. When the prodigiously mighty-lunged Kierra addresses the Lord, the audience whoops with delight. "Kierra first sang at our church about four years ago, and she shocked everybody," Clark-Sheard says proudly. "That's when I knew there's something here that's gonna continue for generations."

Elysa Gardner

*Each year, 6 out of 10 bridesmaids are
forced to wear fuchsia.*



Quintessence® Call 1-800-343-9000



Introducing instant black and white film.

A way to make things look, well, better.

Polaroid *See what develops.*

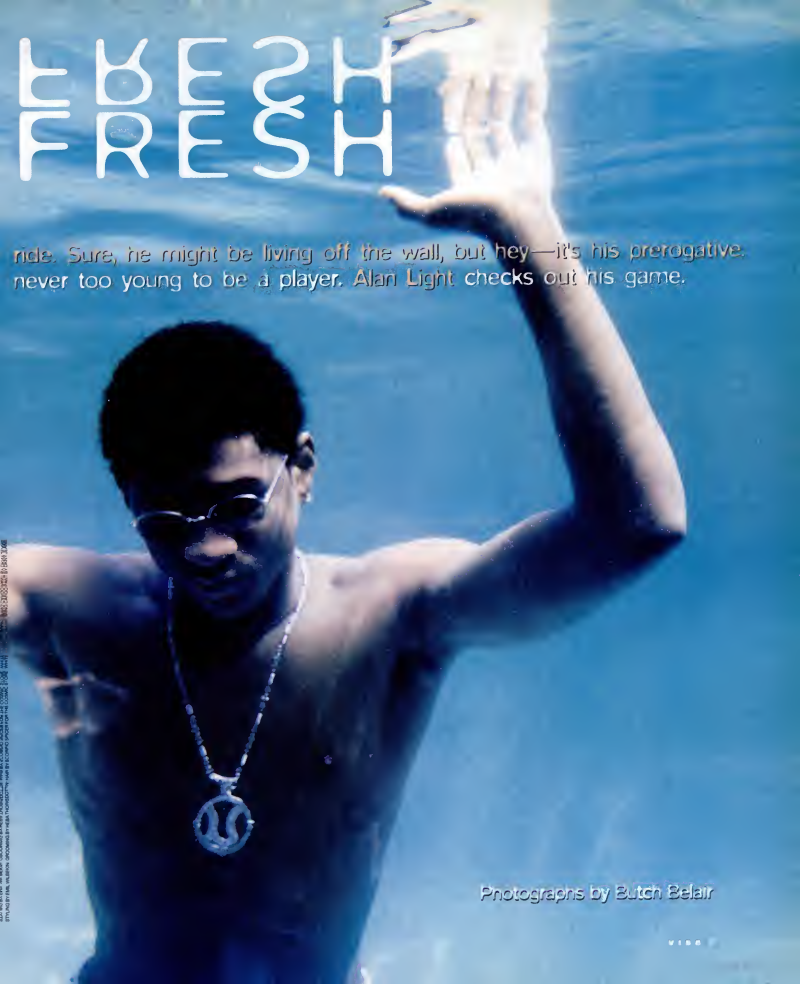
Copyright © 1999 Polaroid Corporation

AQUA

He's got a fast car, washboard abs, and a multiplatinum ticket to
At 19, Usher Raymond is living, fluid, muscle-flexing proof that you're



FRESH

A man is swimming underwater, looking towards the camera. He is wearing sunglasses and a chain with a large circular pendant. His right arm is raised, with his hand open and fingers spread. The water is clear and blue.

ride. Sure, he might be living off the wall, but hey—it's his prerogative. never too young to be a player. Alan Light checks out his game.

Photographs by Butch Belair

Having an energetic nineteen-year-old boss sure is great."

Greg Thompson sighs and shakes his head. It's midnight at Crossover Studios, on the industrial outskirts of Atlanta, where Usher and his hastily summoned band have exactly three hectic days of rehearsal to pull together a set for his 19-city tour opening for Mary J. Blige. Usher has spent the last few hours at every other studio in town, searching for a sequencer compatible with the group's keyboard setup before finally locating the right one at mega-producer Jermaine Dupri's house.

The band are just about to call it a night when Usher bounds in the door. He wants Thompson, the drummer and music director, to hook up the sequencer so they can run through some of the transitions one more time, plus they need to study a Jackson 5 greatest hits CD to help them figure out a Michael Jackson medley. And of course, it's all got to go down *now*, before he flies out to Jamaica to tape a spot for MTV's *Spring Break*, because after he's off to Los Angeles to shoot the video for the new single, the title track to his album *My Way*, with director of the moment Paul Hunter.

Usher's life has been, shall we say, kind of busy ever since *My Way* dropped last fall. With his supple voice, smooth dance moves, and dreamy eyes, Usher has taken only two singles—the irresistibly slinky "You Make Me Wanna..." which topped *Billboard*'s R&B singles chart for 10 weeks, and the ghetto-to-love ballad (Usher's description) "Nice & Slow"—to push album sales up around three million. They show no sign of slowing down either, with several potential smashes still waiting in the wings, including "Just Like Me," a salacious duet with Lil' Kim, and Teddy Riley's supersweet "I Will," plus a May spring and summer full of touring: after the *My Way* tour, Usher will be opening for Janet Jackson on her American dates. "Now is when the pressure starts," he says. "I've met a lot of people, and I've been everybody's friend, like, 'There's that cute guy Usher,' and I've been nice to everybody, but now I have to prove myself as an entertainer."

Though he's wrapped up his guest appearances on *Mo'Nasty*, playing opposite Brandy as her sometime boyfriend Jeremy, there's interest in reviving his character next season. And there's talk of Usher, who's prone to dropping his pants onstage anyway, modeling a Marky Mark-style Calvin Klein campaign.

But right now, Usher Raymond IV isn't sweating any of it. "The hardest working young man in show business!" he cries, bouncing up to bash on the drum kit. When rehearsal finally breaks up around 1:30, this year's teen idol offers me a ride back to my hotel in his brand-new Porsche Boxster—a black two-seater with a sinfully soft peanut butter color interior (price tag approximately \$50,000, a gift from his boss, LaFace Records copresident L.A. Reid). Usher is on his way back to Dupri's house to lay down a vocal for a remix of the new single, but he says that working hard for the money into the wee hours doesn't faze him. "Man," he says, turning up the radio, "I been awake since I was thirteen."

But if it's true, as the Time once said, that gigolos get lonely too, then it stands to reason that teenage

heartthrobs get tired sooner or later. And the next day, Usher is indeed one exhausted-looking sex symbol. Skinnyer and younger looking than his gleaming abs on *My Way*'s back cover might indicate, he lies flat on the blue-gray carpet and calls out instructions to the band, his eyes struggling to stay open.

Turns out he got a speeding ticket on his way to Dupri's studio, and by the time he got there, the engineer had gone home, so they couldn't record anyway. But Usher still had to wake up in the morning to go over the commands his pit bull learned in obedience school and to look at furniture with his mom/manger, Jonnetta Patton. It's enough to make you believe his claims that he's traveling and rehearsing too much to have a girlfriend right now (though his reputation as a full-time flirt seems well earned).

"The hardest working young man in show business," he repeats over lunch, mumbling it this time and resting his head on his arms.

Child stars of all sorts, of course, have a difficult time getting older in the real world, but there seems to be a particularly disturbing pattern for young soul men. Usher is the latest in a long line of hunky R&B stars under the age of 20—young black men caught at that moment when the world finds them cute but not threatening. But few of these singers have stories with happy endings: Frankie Lymon tore up the charts with "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" at 13 and died from a heroin overdose at 26; Bobby Brown ruled the world at 17 with the seven years later between public fascination with his arrests and apathy toward his music (last year's *Forever* didn't even sell 100,000 copies); Tevin Campbell, the most recent contender for the throne, was a sure-shot superstar at 13 but got lost in confusion over his image a few short years later. And of course, there's Michael Jackson, the troubled Onyx and Future King of Preadolescent Pop, to whom any teen male singer must inevitably withstand comparison both on- and offstage.

There are a few factors, however, that point toward a more hopeful future for Usher, starting with the times we live in. Superprofessionalism, '90s style, is the dominant characteristic of our recent wave of teen stars. From LeAnn Rimes and Brandy to Hanson and blues boy Jonny Lang, good old-fashioned hard work and seemingly boundless ambition have been the secrets to success, not weird gimmicks or creepy sexuality (well, okay, except for, like, Foxy Brown). Whether they're having much fun is another question altogether.

The atmosphere in Usher's rehearsal studio is all work and very little play: none of his boys hanging around, no screaming girls clawing at the doors, not really even anyone from the label or management supervising or looking on; just Usher putting his hand through their paces. Other than the occasional effortless slide or B-boy-style backspin, he's not even allowing himself the release of his joyful, fluid dancing. Usher gives off no eerie kiddie-star vibe, neither the wild-child charge of Bobby Brown nor the supernatural glow of Michael Jackson (though he's certainly not afraid of the comparisons—medleys of both performers' hits feature prominently

in Usher's stage show).

In fact, if Usher resembles any teenage pop star before him, it's L.L. Cool J., who was 19 himself when the combination of his buff body and the vulnerability of "I Need Love" took him to the top of the charts. And just as L.L. parlayed his record sales, sex appeal, and rapper-next-door charm into sitcom roles and Gap ads, so Usher dreams of a multimedia future writing commercials and movie scores, producing other artists, and maybe getting into more TV and movie acting.

"One dream," Usher says during a break from rehearsal, "is someday I want to show up on every chart that's in *Billboard*. To do it, I got to, I don't know, do a song with LeAnn Rimes, come up with a gospel record—to show people I got versatility, that music is real to me. It's everything, it's my days and my nights, my morning and my evening."

His focus wasn't always there during Usher's (even) younger days growing up in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He and his little brother, James, had a hardscrabble life with a single parent. "I don't care to talk about Usher's father," says Ms. Patton. "He's never been a part of his life." She, however, was church director at St. Elmer's Missionary Baptist Church and started Usher singing in church when his age was still in single digits, mostly to keep him out of trouble. But young Mr. Raymond didn't really take to it at first.

"I was more or less letting my life go by," he says, sounding as if he were looking back at his postcollegiate, slacker days and not his years in grade school. "As a child, you're not really worried about tomorrow because you got your mother to take care of you. When you get older, you start thinking, I got to do something with my life. I saw how my father was, and as an example of that I sort of said I'm not going to end up like that."

When he started showing an aptitude for singing, his mother put him on the talent show circuit, including a 1992 stint as a national teen champion on *Star Search*. When L.A. Reid's brother, Bryant, spotted Usher at a taping, an offer from LaFace Records quickly followed. A trip to *Shoetime at the Apollo* was canceled, and the family upped and moved to Atlanta.

Reid soon hooked Usher up with another rising star—a kid from New York named Sean "Puffy" Combs, who'd helped launch the likes of Jodeci and Mary J. Blige. Combs, in turn, brought in an all-star cast of producers and songwriters including Jodeci's DeVante Swing, A.B. Sure!, and Dave "Jam" Hall for an up-to-the-minute post-new jack swing blend. Usher found himself singing lyrics like "I know what to do with the up and down, round and round / I'm just gonna give it to you... / Can't stop till you're satisfied." The Usher album came out in 1994, and it looked like superstardom was right around the corner. And then—nothing. Despite all the hype, sales of the album to this day aren't halfway to gold status.

"The first album, I was young," says Usher, "maybe too young to be talking about making love to a girl, 'cause it wasn't really real. I think a lot of people really liked me as an artist, but that just wasn't the record that would make them say, 'I love Usher.'"

"I was always the kid that would just sit by the radio at sleepovers," Usher says. "They'd be like, 'Come play hide and go seek,' but I'd want to stay up and hear the slow jams on the radio because they didn't play those songs during the day."

"The first album, I was young," says Usher, "maybe too young to be talking about making love to a girl."



Patton says the first album was "lacking promotion," and she also admits that she was concerned about her son running with the notorious Bad Boy crew.

"At first I really did not want to see that, because I did not like his lifestyle," she says. "But it was more or less a career move, and I almost couldn't say no. I also knew how Usher was raised, so I took my chances, because I knew that he wouldn't get caught up in it."

Though he emerged seemingly unscathed, Usher says it wasn't quite so easy for him to resist temptation. "I was living a fast life," he says of his time with Puffy (who called Usher a little brother back then) and crew, including Biggie Smalls and Craig Mack. "I really was, like, wild—having a lot to do with the industry, just being a Bad Boy, or whatever."

After the first album came and went, Usher entered a difficult phase. "I went through a lot of things personally; lost my voice; raised my voice back up." He also battled acne and confusion over his next music direction. "I was really frustrated for three years," says Patton. "We went from producer to producer and nothing was working. We recorded about thirty songs, but L.A. wasn't really feeling them." Puffy, whom Usher still speaks of fondly, had moved on to his Bad Boy plan for world domination. "I made calls to him," says Usher, "but he was dealing with a lot—Biggie's death, problems in his family—so I guess time just wouldn't allow him to do it."

Enter Jermaine Dupri. Atlanta's resident neo-generation hit master produced six of the nine tracks on *My Way*, crafting songs that capture the perfect balance of a 19-year-old poised right at the brink of adolescence and adulthood, grown up enough to have lived a little, but young enough to still be longing for love—and sex. The selection of singles from the album so far has traced an interesting arc of Usher's maturation: The schoolboy crush of "You Make Me Wanna..." was followed by the sweet seduction of "Nice & Slow" and leads to straight-up macking somebody else's girl on "My Way."

"The first album wasn't as close to my personality as this album," says Usher. "Like, 'My Way' is basically showing who I am. It's about a guy who was hating on me about his girl. I wasn't really doing nothing with her because I knew that I could get away with him *thinking* that I did, so I just went ahead and played it. It's more or less an extension of Usher—cool, wild, just having fun."

"I wrote a lot of things I'd hear him say," says Dupri. "I'd tell him to call a girl and talk to her so I could hear how he kicked it—I'd just tell him to talk about some bullshit, and I wouldn't tell him why. I'd listen in to get his vibe so I could write it like he'd say it."

"There was a superstar inside Usher waiting to get out," continues an animated J.D. "I just had to find out who he was, not try to make him be me or be anyone you've seen before."

"Jermaine opened me up to the crowd I always wanted to cater to," Usher says, "the younger as well as the older. With Puffy, it was really narrow. This time I realized that it ain't as much about being a Bad Boy as it is about being yourself."

I always want to know what makes good performers fall to pieces. I always try to find out. Because I just can't believe it's the same things that get them time and time again.
—Michael Jackson, 1983

This is the part I like best," says Usher, gliding into Atlanta's Lenox Square Mall. "—spending money."

He parks the Porsche by the stairs in the parking lot and quietly slips into Foot Locker, instantaneously picking out a pair of Nikes and a pair of Pumas and grabbing an Atlanta Braves cap to hide under. Though he's careful to move quickly and inconspicuously, there's no mob hysteria this afternoon—fans approach him cordially, give him a pound, maybe ask for an autograph (except for one gentleman in cornrows, just out of Usher's earshot, who mutters that Usher is a "punk" to his girlfriend). "I hope he does hear me—I'll kick his ass. Hell yeah, I'm a player great!" Usher, presumably, does not hear this greeting.

Another rapid spin, this time through Champs, results in another pair of Nikes, a jersey, T-shirt, another baseball cap, and a sweatband. Total cost of this precision strike? Approximately \$350. Total time elapsed? Less than 15 minutes.

It's a little disconcerting to hear a LaFace Records artist take such joy in luxury spending these days—this is the label, after all, that has seen both TLC and Toni Braxton file for bankruptcy despite their billion-selling records. But Usher says that he's learned from their mistakes, and that, sneaker sprees aside, his business is handled.

"TLC's mistake," he claims, "was signing not with the record company but with their management, Pebbles. So they didn't really have anyone to stand behind them and watch their back. And Toni, that was very scary, but how I look at it... I'm not saying she didn't work for her success, because she did, but I didn't get it immediately, so I been able to respect it. You got to realize that with record companies, when you're spending money, you don't see it, almost like a credit card. If I have a hundred dollars in the bank, I'm not going out and spending ninety."

"My mother knew she had to go in there and fight for me," he continues, "like, 'Hold up, I'm going to get me an attorney to come in and read this contract and make sure I'm not getting cheated.' I feel especially comfortable with LaFace now because they're watching themselves even more. And besides, it's more or less a father-son-type thing with me and L.A. I ain't never

Flying Solo

Is Usher single, too busy to mingle? By Denene Miller



Monica

There he was—onstage at New York City's Madison Square Garden, last December—pouring bottled water down his hairless chest onto his washboard abs, pumping his little hips. "Now, tell me," he said, grinning a devilish grin, "whatchoo wanna do wit' me?" The young girls in the audience, of course, went into a fiending frenzy. Usher, at age 19, is the teen sex symbol du jour.

So, as to be expected, in the pop culture rumor mill, folks have linked Usher with some of pop music's hottest young ladies, from teen diva Brandy to *Miss Thang* herself, Monica. Sources tell VIBE, though, that the only time Usher gets play is when he's up onstage—alone. Folks say Usher doesn't date because he's simply too busy. Yeah, yeah.

"I don't know how he has time to even go to sleep," says a publicist at Usher's label, LaFace Records. "—let alone have a girlfriend." Certainly, that could be a company line. (It's easier to keep lucrative little females lusting after Usher when they think he's single.) Still, even the gossip experts say they've got nothing on him. "I haven't seen him with anyone on his arm lately," says the queen of scoop/publisher of *Sister 2* Sister magazine, Jamie Foster Brown. "These days, he's telling people he's single."

Here's the real:

On Brandy: Usher denies having had anything other than a professional relationship with the budding songstress. But with Usher playing Brandy's boo Jeremy, on her hit show, *Moesha*, it's natural for folks to assume they got a thing going on. However, Usher told *April Deas* of the New York-based teen newspaper *Harlem Overheard*, that it's not the case. "Brandy and I kicked it and stuff," he said. "We were just friends, though. I keep all business away from pleasure."

On Monica: Usher lent vocals to Monica's "Let's Straighten It Out" (from the soundtrack to *Panther*, as well as *Miss Thang*) in 1995, and then the statuesque vocalist returned the favor on Usher's 1997 "Slow Jam." So fans were prone to believe that the couple were more than just collaborators. Apparently, though, a duet (or two, even) does not a romantic relationship make. "Monica has been dating [No Limit soldier] C-Murder," says Foster Brown. "That's her man."

[Spokespersons for both artists had no comment.] There was a time, though, when Usher was romantically linked with a semiregular, Kruon, daughter of multitalented entertainer Ben Vereen. Foster Brown remembers meeting the young couple, "He came up, and she was standing there with him." Foster Brown recalled, "Kruon's really cute—but that was a long time ago."

Could it be, that at the end of every sex-drunked performance, Usher goes home alone? Not likely.



007

(BOND, JAMES BOND)

I think it's just a pen.
(I hope it's just a pen.)

Official Business,
I swear.

Licence to drive.

Licence to kill.

Visa Purchases:

Flowers for Marypening - \$24.75
Plane ticket (New York to London to Paris
to Munich to Geneva to Istanbul to Rio
to Zambia to Nepal to Monte Carlo) - \$10,733.24
Cash advance in Monte Carlo - \$500.00
New tux (pesky bullet holes) - \$4,359.92

Incredibly Complex Wallet Computer.
(Mostly ladies numbers.)

Tomorrow Never Dies
Now on Video.

It's not your wallet.
It's in your life.
It's everywhere you want to be.



www.rankit.com

*Tomorrow Never Dies® is a registered trademark of the United Artists Corporation. All rights reserved. © 1997 United Artists Corporation. All rights reserved. Visa® is a registered trademark of Visa U.S.A. Inc.

really had a father, and L.A. is like a father to me in this industry. I call him Pop."

If the image of a young recording star referring to his label president as his father fills you with terror for his financial future, Usher's manager and real-life mom says not to worry. She also speaks more bluntly of the woes the LaFace ladies have seen. "When things like that happen to artists, it's their fault," she says. "You hire a team to worry about your money, and you should pay attention as well. I don't blame the label; I blame the artists—you're supposed to watch out for your money! I'm just going to make sure that nothing like that happens to Usher."

Asked what he's learned from the fallen teen idols before him, Usher rattles off some simple lessons. "I don't do drugs, and I don't have people around me who do drugs. I learned that you really got to watch the people you keep around you." But beyond that, he won't comment on the travails of, say, Michael Jackson or Bobby Brown. "I don't really get caught up in that. When you become a household name, it's like you can't even form an opinion. That's something you just got to accept and roll with the punches."

One thing that stands out as an especially good sign for Usher's future is his surprisingly voracious music curiosity. Though he'll boom KP & Envy when they come on the radio (he's a southerner after all), he calls the late, brilliant Chicago balladeer Donny Hathaway his greatest inspiration. "I like those deeper, darker tones," he says. Acid jazzers Omar and Terence Trent D'Arby are in heavy rotation in the Porsche, and references to legends such as Harlem hoofers the Nicholas Brothers and Jackie "Mr. Excitement" Wilson fall easily from Usher's much-coveted lips.

"I was always the kid that would just sit by the radio at sleepovers," he says, idling in the studio parking lot as dusk falls. "They'd be like, 'C'mon, come play hide and go seek,' but I'd want to stay up and hear the slow jams on the radio because they didn't play those songs during the day."

It's getting late again, and Usher's time to talk is up. He still has to help the band work out some interludes, plus now it looks as if he may have to go into the studio later tonight to record some vocals for the MTV taping in Jamaica. He had wanted to go buy a truck today, but that's going to have to wait at least until he's back from L.A. It doesn't look like this pace is going to let up anytime soon either, especially with Usher's goal of making *My Way* go "as many platins as it possibly can." But this lean, teen, singing and dancing machine sure makes it look like he's got it all under control, like he's ready to dodge the traps history has set for him.

"I could be wrong," he says with a grin, "but I think my life isn't like other nineteen year olds." □

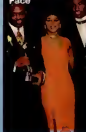


L.A. Story Cool as a cucumber, LaFace Records co-owner Antonio "L.A." Reid talks about Toni Braxton's bankruptcy, her lawsuit against his label, and what is and what is not "appropriate."

Has LaFace treated Toni Braxton unfairly?

L.A.: I don't think we've been unfair. Toni reached a point in her career where she certainly deserved a better situation. We've always been prepared to accommodate her.

L.A. with Toni and LaFace



Does financial difficulty come with being a LaFace artist?

L.A.: I don't think so. TLC never had beef with the label. They signed a production deal with [Pebbles, the production company of Reid's ex-wife, Perry "Pebbles" Reid] and became unhappy with it. When they wanted to get out, it turned into a lawsuit. Once it was settled, LaFace was there to take care of them.

What's the deal with Barry Hankerson, Toni's new manager?

L.A.: I'm not sure what Barry's role is. Toni can be a very persuasive. I think Barry is trying to do what the artist would like to have done.

Has LaFace made more money than it ought to?

L.A.: The claims that Toni received a very low royalty and a very low percentage are not entirely true. If you take all of Toni's sales from her first and second albums and totaled them, and then look at the amount of money she was paid and stop right there, it looks very

unfair. Because it only deals with the fact that she was paid for the first album. The second album—she refused the check because she didn't think it was big enough.

Do you have the money to give her when she wants it?

L.A.: Absolutely. She has royalties coming from her second album—but the huge advances that artists get when they renegotiate their deals and things like that? Nah. She requested it, we made it available, then she decided it wasn't enough. It sounds right, but it's incorrect unless you can't add [laughs]. My goal is for all of my artists to be rich. That's my goal.

Compare this situation to George Michael's [Michael's sued Sony in 1993 over marketing control]

L.A.: I hope it doesn't go that far. With Toni being at the brink of superstardom, the most important thing for her is to get back in the studio and make great records. If she accomplishes that, she'll be fine. If her goal is to continue to fight herself—because she's not fighting me, because I'm not fighting—she'll damage herself. That's what happened with George Michael. It's inappropriate to share your finances with your public. What is appropriate is that you share your experiences, because fans can relate to that. But what fans can really relate to [an artist's complaints]? How many fans make five million? It's inappropriate for any creative person to go to the media to discuss their finances. She's put something on our minds that we otherwise wouldn't be thinking about: her checkbook. Nobody knows how much money I've made or lost. And guess what? Nobody cares.

THERE'S A FINE LINE
BETWEEN RAZOR BUMPS AND
A COMFORTABLE SHAVE.
ACTUALLY, TEN OF THEM.



▶ **THE REVOLUTIONARY
SCHICK® PROTECTOR™**



The only razor with blades wrapped in ultra-thin safety wires, for a shave that glides to cut your beard, not your skin. Guaranteed—or your money back.

Schick®

The feel of SmartDesign™
www.schick.com



From left: Cee-Lo, Big Gipp,
T-Mo, Khujo



revolution

rock

Atlanta's Goodie MOB

fight for truth, justice,

but not necessarily

the American way.

By David Bry

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAULINE ST. DENIS

Ten-thirty at night. Four black men stand on the steps of the United States Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. The sky is low. Glowing a deep, eerie orange, thick blankets of clouds obscure the moon. It will rain soon.

"Wickedness," says the bearded, dreadlocked Willie "Khjujo" Knighton, looking up at the two-story pillars that line the facade of the neoclassical structure. "Red skies behind the Supreme Court building. We in the last days, man. It's a time of symbols. That's a sign right there. The Supreme Court? That's just the Klan with their masks off. *Judges*—know what I'm talkin' 'bout? It's like, 'Who are you to judge?'"

Robert "T-Mo" Barnett blinks his hands into fists and holds them out in front of his body. "Goodie MOB stand for change in America and society," he says. "Right here, in the belly of the beast right now, man, squirmin', squirmin' like worms."

Cameron Gipp (Big Gipp) stands quietly, polishing his silver front. Fingering the bejeweled fangs, he gazes across the street where the spired white dome of the Capitol building rises above a tall iron gate.

Twenty-three years old, bald, and barrel-chested, Thomas "Cee-Lo" Burton pulls a red ski mask over his face and lights a cigarette through the open mouth hole. "You've got to destroy to build," he says calmly.

D.C. and Atlanta quartet the Goodie MOB are an uneasy fit. The band have journeyed from the Peachtree State to the nation's capital for a day of "sight-seeing." They hit all the postcard spots—Iwo Jima Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument—but no one's buying any bald-eagle buttons. No one's waving any miniature flags.

You wouldn't expect them to. After all, these are the guys who authored the timeless "Cell Theory," giving voice to the walls-are-closing-in-all-around-you paranoia of hip-hop's government-wary conspiracy theorists.

"There's a war we've got to fight," says Cee-Lo. "Ignorance is perpetuated, and it's done purposefully because a capitalist society needs someone to capitalize on." But what about that high society of capital called the music industry? How do Goodie reconcile distributing their music on a major label?

"To a certain extent, we all fall prey to the robotics," Cee-Lo says thoughtfully. "But we try to find the freedom to be in the system and not of the system. We're not living for the mere fame or mere fortune you can get from this. I mean, it is profitable, but that's not the motivation. It's a war we've got to fight. Our people are doing most of the suffering. Goodie MOB fight for justice with truth, chanting their 'hood-spun battle hymns against the republic they see as rife with lies."

Goodie's sophomore album, *Still Standing* (LaFace), offers aid to those in life's trenches, battling ignorance with inspiration and keeping folks warm with slow, bonfire grooves. "I don't sell dope," declares Cee-Lo on "Gutta Butts," the LP's seventh track. A muffled bass line creeps along like a Slinky down the stairs. "I sell hope." "Beautiful Skin" is an impassioned love letter to all black women. Gipp, though, brings his verse home, celebrating his songstress fiancée Joi and the family they've started with their two-year-old daughter, Keyssia Blue Daydreamer. "Closer than the skin on the back of my hand," he vows. "Through the thick and thin / We can win / Beautiful black skin."

Imagine Public Enemy covering Al Green's "Let's Stay Together" or Rage Against the Machine doing Barry White. Goodie MOB bring good things to life, mixing street-hardened politics with kinder, gentler emotions. And why not? Freedom fighters need love

too. "We know we have to put the joy and the love and the happiness back in the music," Cee-Lo says, "so people can start feeling it again. Music can save lives, man. I can bear witness to that."

A deeply spiritual body-art enthusiast whose skills as an MC and a singer are matched only by his eloquence preaching, Cee-Lo carries a galaxy's worth of experience in his large, round eyes. Both his parents were Baptist ministers; he's sung in gospel choirs since the time he could walk. But his father died when he was two. At school, classmates teased Cee-Lo about his small size, and he had big problems controlling his anger. He spent years removed from the mainstream educational system in "trailer classes" for troubled kids and dropped out of the ninth grade.

In 1992, Cee-Lo's mother was paralyzed in a car accident. Bedridden in a hospital, she lived for three years—just long enough to hear herself immortalized on Goodie MOB's audio Mother's Day card, "Guess Who"—before passing. Cee-Lo spoke at her funeral. "I've had some times in my life, bro," Cee-Lo says. But he's found serenity and salvation through his faith and through his music. "I'm able to evaluate different situations through writing songs. It's peace to me. Not to say that I worship music, but I have found God in it. It's like, if you could envision what music looked like, that would be God."

And as Cee-Lo offers praise to the musical divine, the musical divine offers back. His voice is a rare gift from a better place. Gravelly, gritty, smooth, and strong, it flows from the same Georgia spring that fed the blessed throats of Ray Charles, Little Richard, James Brown, and Otis Redding. "Cee-Lo," says Rico Wade, whose Organized Noise production team creates most of Goodie MOB's music, "was chosen."

Wade, Cee-Lo, and the rest of the Goodie MOB grew up among the pine-tree thickets, winding roads, and small suburban homes that mark an area of Georgia known as the S.W.A.T.S. (*South West Atlanta, Too Strong*). In the early part of the decade, Wade put together a recording studio in the basement of his mother's house. He called it the Dungeon, and—along with his partners, Ray Murray and Patrick Brown—used the space to develop a silky southern sound that would eventually push fellow Atlantan artists like TLC and OutKast to multimillion-dollar success. It was here that the Goodie MOB coalesced, met LaFace Records copresident L.A. Reid, and wrote their debut war-work-gang appearances on "Call of da Wild" and "Git Up, Get Out" from OutKast's platinum 1994 debut, *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik* (LaFace).

The next year, Goodie signed with LaFace and completed a gorgeous full-length disc called *Soul Food*. Swaying from church organ-charged spirituals like "Free" to heavy-bass criminology reports like "Dirty South," the album defied easy definition. It went gold.

Goodie MOB are about making a sincere effort to walk in step with God while acknowledging the truth: that they'll fall behind just as often as anyone else. "Sometimes I come home too high to pray," rhymed Khjujo on 1995's "Thought Process." Expressions of such vulnerability allow their fans to relate to the music on an intensely personal level. "How can I promise you forever / What I can't even do for the rest of the day?" Cee-Lo sings on *Still Standing*'s hypnotic "Inshallah." No one's up on any pedestal, and folks can feel it.

It's a cool gray afternoon, 1998, and T-Mo, Khjujo, and Gipp (all 26 years old) are back in the S.W.A.T.S., corner of Lakewood and Conrad.

Leaning against Gipp's bronze Cadillac Regal, they pass round a dank-packed bulb and reminisce. T-Mo smiles. "Every one of those windows got a story in it," he says, nodding toward the shingled brick building that held the original Dungeon. (Wade has since moved his studio into a mansion across the street from Atlanta Braves' Hall of Famer Hank Aaron.) "When a lot of us was still down' our thing on the streets," says Gipp, tucking one of his shoulder-length braids behind an ear. "This was the only place we could hear music. It's where all the vibes came together. OutKast used to run around the block, sayin' their rhymes. This was our training ground."

Three old friends from the neighborhood amble over and exchange handshakes and hugs. Dressed in nylon sweatpants and house shoes, they ask when they can hear the new record and joke about when they're gonna get put on. It gets quiet for a second as a dark sedan pulls up to the curb. The driver's-side window rolls down, and one of the guys steps forward and pokes his head inside. A sale is made: He comes back out folding two \$10 bills in his right hand.

"Same people that was here when we were here," says T. "They still here. Them boys—they was young dudes, short and small, then they got tall. We were influenced by what was goin' on around us. I think it helped direct our music. People round here doing what they was doing, livin' in trailers, sellin' dope."

"Dope is just a part of our generation," Gipp says, dragging a bottle cap across the cracked pavement with his foot. "Like when my father and them came outta high school, war was the thing. They was going to war with Vietnam and Korea. Dope is really the battle that we fight right now on these streets."

Around the time when Gipp's dad was trudging through mud in southeast Asia, a stone soul singer named Curtis Mayfield was grappling with the establishment on the home front. Mayfield's music called for social change in no uncertain terms and retained a vibrant sense of hope rooted firmly in the spiritual. Thirty years later, the Goodie MOB bring similar spirit to *Still Standing*. Wagging their war on radio waves, in boom boxes, and in Walkmans, the four-man tune platoon struggle for change.

The transcendent power of the Goodie MOB, though, is best experienced in concert. On a humid night late last summer, the four verse men brought their live band to Lower Manhattan's S.O.B.'s. Throwing themselves into the music, losing their bodies to the sound, Khjujo, T-Mo, Gipp, and Cee-Lo led a packed house through a two-hour healing ritual. It was pure group catharsis.

At the end of the show—with the staccato piano riff of "Cell Theory" still ringing in the rafters above the applause—a shirtless, sweat-drenched Cee-Lo stepped down off the stage and joined the teeming crowd.

"Look around," he commanded, eyes on fire. "We're strong! All of us. White. Black. Asian. Puerto Rican. All in here together. There is strength in our unity!" The crowd surged forward. Cee-Lo raised a clenched fist above his head and shouted: "Put your hand in the air if you're with me. I wanna see every person in here with a hand up in the air for revolution!" He repeated the words, and a thousand fists punched the air.

"Revolution," Cee-Lo was speaking slowly now, and clearly, "doesn't mean fighting and shooting out in the streets. Revolution means change."

A thousand fists held high in the air. A thousand fists for change. □

C'MON. PUT SOME SWEAT INTO IT.

Now you don't have to worry about being
offensive after the game is over. That's
because Irish Spring® Sport® has an
extra, antibacterial ingredient that kills
the germs that cause body odor. So if
you want to make a good impression off
the field, use the soap that works as
hard as you play — Irish Spring Sport.



PLAY AS HARD AS YOU LIKE.



© 2001 Irish Spring, Inc. All rights reserved.

© 2001 Irish Spring, Inc. All rights reserved.

From left: Tamika, Tameka, Kandi, LaTocha



One by one they emerge, decked in varying combinations of black evening-wear. The four women of Xscape—sisters LaTocha and Tamika Scott, Tameka “Tiny” Cottle, and Kandi Burrus—are scattered about the top-floor New York City photography studio preparing for the last shot of the day. Gone is the round-the-way girl look they sported on their hip-hop-inspired 1993 platinum debut, *Hammin’ Comin’ at Cha*. Gone also is the slightly more sophisticated, business-suit look that the troupe rocked on 1995’s silky *Off the Hook*. Now, for the release of their newest disc, the ballad-heavy *Traces of My Lipstick*, these four fully grown Atlanta belles are all glamour.

“When they first came out, Jermaine wanted them to be the ghetto En Vogue,” says Michael Mauldin, Columbia Records’ Black Music president and dad to producer-plus Jermaine Dupri. “That’s where the bandannas and baggy jeans came in.” They’ve definitely come a long way from the high school girls who sang for JD at his birthday bash back in ‘91.

“Honestly, I love this new image,” Kandi says, modeling a lace body suit and four-inch heels. “I want a nigga to be like, ‘Damn, she fine.’ If I had to see one more damn suit...boy, I tell you, y’all might not have seen me this year.”

The girls finally come together for a pic. They end the session by serenading the photographer with “The Arms of the One Who Loves You,” the first single off *Traces*, which the group have dubbed their “bedroom album” because it’s teeming with seductive lyrics. They sing passionately, desperately—almost as if it’s for the last time. Stylists, transfixed, drop what they’re doing to listen. *This* is what Xscape is all about: voices.

They’ve always been all about singing—all except Tiny, who initially studied to be a dancer. The foursome met while attending Tri-City High, in College Park, Georgia. They stayed out of the institution’s thuggish-ruggish fray by taking performing arts classes. Tocha convinced Tiny to try out for the group, and in 1990, Xscape was formed. “It was fate,” Tamika tells me over a postshoot dinner of gourmet soul food. “Our father has a church, and we grew up singing in the choir. We met Kandi and found out that her grandfather was the bishop over our church.”

The Scott sisters would eventually hit the talent show circuit under the guidance of their father. “Even when they were four and five years old, their voices stood out in the choir, so I knew their potential,” says Pastor Randolph Scott, who himself was in an R&B group called the Scott Three in the early ‘70s. “They can touch people in ways that I never could.”

Being with Xscape is like hanging out on the porch on a summer day with your favorite cousins, drinking sweetened iced tea and catching up on all the gossip. During dinner, they eat off one another’s plates; crack jokes. At one point, Tiny whips out a package of birth control pills from her purse, prompting a conversation about everyone’s contraceptive method of choice. It’s definitely a family affair.

Though still young by industry standards (Tocha, at 25, is the oldest, and Kandi, the youngest, is 21), Xscape have done much living. The boisterous, free-spirited Tamika is married, has a four-year-old daughter, and has found God. She was recently ordained as a minister and plans to record a solo gospel album in the near future. Tiny, often referred to as the light-skinned one, has a two-year-old daughter with her high school sweetheart and is planning a project with Kandi after this album.

Tocha, the eldest member and self-proclaimed mama of the bunch, is engaged to her longtime boyfriend and father of her 11-month-old son, and is planning to devote more of her spare time to writing songs. “Whitney Houston just accepted a song I wrote for her album,” she says, her doe eyes widening. “I couldn’t believe it when her people called. My mother still has the message saved somewhere.”

Although each member of Xscape has big future solo plans, for the present, they are fully united, with high hopes for *Traces* (which also features the songwriting and production talents of giants like Diane Warren and Babyface). Yet you can’t help but notice that their hope seems mixed with a sense of disillusionment. Even with all the successes, the group, as a whole, feel dissed.

“If vocals were everything, then Xscape would be a ten-million-seller group,” says Kandi. “But half of being a successful artist is looking like what every woman wants to look like and being what every man wants.” So the girls have decided to give in a little. They are now in the gym regularly.

“We look at magazines and at the lists of the hottest girl groups, and we’re never in there,” Tiny says. It’s true: the girls don’t look like models; they rarely show skin. They’re everyday people—sisters, mothers, cousins—and they just want to sing. And who could be mad at that? ■

THE LAST TEMPTATION OF SPIKE

ONCE
A HOT YOUNG UPSTART
WHOSE FILMS PLAYED
THE RACE CARD
WAY BEFORE JOHNNIE COCHRAN,
SPIKE LEE'S
BECOME A STATELY AUTEUR
WHO BRICKS AT THE BOX OFFICE.
WILL HIS RACY NEW
B-BALL FLICK
SHOOT HIM BACK
TO THE TOP?

By CRAIGH BARBOZA



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHANNA GOODMAN

In the courtyard of a towering housing project on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, a father and son are talking trash as they bump and bang their way to the basket. It's a dark, 80-degree-plus night, made hotter by the glare of playground lamps and a growing crowd of onlookers. Old school hustlers in tank tops and gold fronts, kids on Huff lowriders, and teenage mothers with baby strollers press against a chain-link fence to get a look at the ballplayers re-enacting the mythic struggle between an aging teacher and his faster, stronger student.

On the sidelines, Spike Lee and his cinematographer Malik Hasan Sayeed watch intently as the climactic sequence of their new film, *He Got Game*, comes to a close. Ray Allen (of the Milwaukee Bucks) drives, leaps, and slams over Denzel Washington, and the crowd of extras at "the Garden," a famous hoops spot in Coney Island, erupts with real-life ooohs and aahs.

"This isn't *Above the Rim*, where guys are jumping off trampolines or dunking on six-foot baskets," says Lee, who incorporates a variety of film techniques—jump cuts, slow motion, off-kilter angles—to enhance tension. "There are no shots in the film where you see a guy shooting the ball and we cut to it again. We're not doing that."

"But for a sports story to work, it has to be about more than just the game," adds Lee. "You use basketball as a landscape to explore the people involved in that game and the decisions that shape their lives. Otherwise, you're just going to attract people who watch ESPN."

Attracting a bigger, more diverse audience has increasingly become a challenge for the director. In the late '80s, Lee shook up the country with a string of controversial, commercial hits and was anointed—largely by the mainstream media—the unofficial spokesman for black America. More recently, however, his star has faded. Spike's Joint East and West-

retail shops that once set clothing trends for kids—shut down last year. And his films have been falling flatter than a Shaquille O'Neal free throw. The downtown began with two flops—the eloquent but nearly plotless *Crooklyn* (1994) and the whodunit "hood movie" *Clockers* (1995). Then came a certified stinker, the incoherent *Girl 6* (1996), which cost \$12 million to make and grossed a paltry \$4.9 million. His last feature, *Get on the Bus*, a Million Man March homage that should have had a built-in audience, also danked off the commercial rim.

Lee, who still commands a great deal of respect in the film community, and even won an Oscar nomination this year for *A Little Girl*, a heart-wrenching



documentary about the 1963 Birmingham church bombing, seems at a loss to explain his less-than-stellar performance at the box office. "I can't speculate on that," he says. "There are a lot of things that determine how a film does. But we have no regrets with the ones we made. They will stand the test of time. *A Little Girl* was probably one of my best ever. So people can say I'm over the hill or whatever they want. I don't even think like that." But the issue isn't whether Lee's days in Hollywood are numbered; it's more about what kind of director he'll turn out to be. Film

critics such as Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* and Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* are already comparing him to Woody Allen, an idiosyncratic auteur who makes relatively low-budget, fiercely personal films for a niche audience.

That could all change with *He Got Game*, a \$24 million star-driven ghetto drama that zeros in on one of the most hotly debated issues of our day: the exploitation of young, minority athletes. Spike says he didn't choose this film for its mass appeal, but there's no denying its potential to boost his career. It's the kind of movie that could prove to Hollywood that the 41-year-old director can still make an accessible, popular picture. It could also renew his credibility among the street-level audience that made films like *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Jungle Fever* (1991) so significant.

"Spike's movies don't create the buzz they once did," says Nathan McCall, author of *What's Going On*. "There used to be a time when it was an event for black folks all over. That doesn't seem to be the case anymore."

Everyone experiences a downturn sometime. But what's worrisome for African-American directors like Lee is the special demands that seem to be placed on them. Martin Scorsese, Oliver Stone, and other white directors don't have to get hits every time out or demonstrate an undying affinity for the street in order to get lasting love. On the other hand, African-American directors seem to be governed by the same thing that drives the music industry: fickle, hip-hop-generation consumers fending for that young, hot, next shit from a young, hot, next-type nigga.

"I go see Spike Lee movies, no doubt," says Fredro Star, the Onyx MC turned actor who had a part in *Clockers*. "I like the way he shoots. He's an artist, but times are changing, and Spike's not really changing with them. He's sticking to what he's been doing,

RIM SHOTS: A QUICK AND DIRTY HISTORY OF PRO BALLERS ON THE SILVER SCREEN

PITY THE POOR FILMMAKER WHO SETS OUT TO MAKE A B-BALL MOVIE. ANY OTHER SPORT IS A PIECE OF CAKE! JUST GET A HALFWAY-ATHLETIC-LOOKING ACTOR LIKE CUBA GOODING JR. OR KEVIN COSTNER AND LET A STUNT DOUBLE HANDLE MOST OF THE ACTION. WITH BASKETBALL, HOWEVER, THE UNIFORM IS TOO REVEALING; THE ATHLETICISM AND GRACE IMPOSSIBLE TO FAKE. AND TRY ACTING SIX FEET SEVEN TALL. BY CHRIS HOUGHTON

BILLIE CHIPS (1989)

Then future and now ex-teenager *Billie Jean King* (Penny) *Hill* (now) have supporting roles as hot-shot school recruits. They mostly shut up, play ball, and try to keep a straight face while Nick Nolte overacts. When called upon to read actual lines, Shaw is terrible, though Penny's not that bad. Four years later, Shaw's making movies like he's Gene Hackman, while Penny doesn't even talk in his own commercials.

RATING: 1/2 (M) (D)



WINNIE (1991)

Not yet Jamal, Keith Wilkes plays on asphalt and drinks soda pop in this supporting role he took on after leaving UCLA. Wilkes went on to win Rookie of the Year with the Golden State Warriors, but nobody described his amateurish acting here as "smooth as silk."

RATING: BLOWN LAYUP



SPACE JAM (1996)

Adrian Pasdar teams up with Bugs Bunny to make the world safe for Nike, or whatever. Odd as it sounds, Jordan isn't terribly convincing playing himself here. Maybe because he isn't shown screaming at the refs or glaring at Toni Kukoc.

RATING: AIRBALL



ARMY OF ONE (1997)

The '82-'83 scoring champ for Denver, Alex English, plays the title role of Amazing Grace Smith, an NBA superstar who helps a child protest the nuclear arms race. A natural actor, English handles a tricky dramatic role with ease. It's amazing he never did another movie.

RATING: SWISH



FAST BREAK (1979)

Between his first two 20-point-plus seasons for the New Jersey Nets, *Knickerbocker* sank his teeth into this juicy supporting role, stealing the film as the scheming hustler. Granted, it was the rather awkward Gene Kaplan he was stealing the film from, but still...

RATING: THREATENING



THE JUNGLE BOOK (1979)

This silly comedy does a fine job of documenting the 1970s NBA—short shorts, huge hair, half-empty arenas, and the entire show dominated by Doctor J. More than anyone else on this list, top-billed Julius Erving stars in this movie. He romances the girl, gives a rousing speech to lead his teammates on to victory, and shows with every frame what too many have forgotten—Doctor J was truly the greatest.

RATING: SLAM DUNK FROM THE FOUL LINE



Make 'em say yes, yes, yes, with Botanicals. Make 'em say yes, yes, yes, with Botanicals. Make 'em say yes, yes, yes, with Botanicals. Make 'em say yes, yes, yes, with Botanicals.



For Naturally gorgeous, tight styles,
you know what to say...
Botanicals.



To receive a Destiny's

Child CD single, send
in proof of purchase
(boxtop with item-
ized receipt or UPC
code of Botanicals
maintenance product
with itemized receipt)
plus \$1.00 for
shipping and han-
dling to:

Destiny's Child CD Offer

P.O. Box 223706

Dallas, Texas

75222

Receive a FREE Destiny's
Child CD single with the
purchase of Botanicals
products.



1998 © Pro-Line Corporation

so the hip hop community's not really feeling him right now. My moms would probably go see one of his joints before I would."

Music impresario Russell Simmons suspects Spike's preachy politics are the problem. "You can't make so many judgments," says Simmons, bringing up the PSA-like malt liquor spot in *Clockers*. "That's why rappers have so much clout with these kids. They say, 'I accept you as you are.'" Simmons adds: "He doesn't want to sound like he's a Westchester nigga, but that's how Spike talks to people sometimes."

"Who said that?" Lee responds angrily. "That's stupid. Are they saying I'm a Westchester nigga because I'm college educated, because I'm not an ignorant motherfucker that doesn't know how to speak? I'm not on the corner holding my nuts, drinking a forty?"

"It's motherfucking stupid-as-fuck thinking like that that has young black kids failing school on purpose," adds Lee, "because if you go to school and you get motherfucking straight A's and speak correct English then you're ridiculed as being a *white boy* or *white girl*. When, if you're fucking ignorant and don't know how to put two fucking words together then you're 'down,' and you're keeping it real."

Be that as it may, there's no denying that there are moments in *He Got Game* when Lee, aiming to be true to his own vision, ends up seeming a little too far removed from the street. For instance, the film's neighborhood drug dealer, Big Time Willie, turns out to be an unintentional parody of himself. Played by the usually on-point Roger Guenveur Smith, Big Time is an ill-conceived roughneck who rides around the neighborhood in a drop-top Benzino kicking silly Ebonic sound bites in one of the most ridiculous ghetto accents you've ever heard.

Lee does an excellent job of capturing the pressures plaguing his main character, man-child Jesus Shuttlesworth (Allen), a hot-shot high school ballplayer who has all the big college recruiters and a few NBA scouts dangling money, mansions, and Maseratis in his grill. But the toughest thing for Shuttlesworth to resist is free sex. In one raunchy sequence, the young hooper is taken on a tour of a powerhouse college, only to find himself sandwiched between two naked blond coeds determined to win his allegiance. We've seen some boning scenes in Lee's previous films—*Jungle Fever* opened with one—but nothing he's done has been this explicit: large *tetas* bouncing in close-up, a glistening ass pumping

furiously, an electric, full-body climax.

"Spike's just trying to show it like it is, or like he feels it is," says Academy-award winner Denzel Washington, who plays Jesus's absentee father, Jake, in the film. Well known for his reluctance to do love scenes, Washington gets somewhat busy in this one—a lil' one-on-one with a prostitute portrayed by Milla Jovovich.

The chance to try something risky, to be the bad guy (or at least the not-so-good-guy) is what attracted Washington to the project, his third collaboration with Lee after *Mo' Better Blues* (1990) and *Malcolm X* (1992). "It's a different character for me, a little harder edged," says Washington, who plays a tough, conniving convict trying to reconcile with his son. "When I read the script, I was like, *Waaa*. I mean, 'I've never been offered anything like this. Not really.'"

Washington has, of course, played flawed, reluctant heroes in big studio movies like *Crimson Tide* and *Courage Under Fire*—men more likely to earn him comparisons to Sidney Poitier than to Charles Barkley. But as poppa Shuttlesworth (cornrows, Jordans, low-jack homing device, and all), Washington is more than believable. He's the film's most complex and compelling figure.

"There's a lot more me in this role than some others I've played," explains Washington, who ran college ball at Fordham University under P.J. Carlesimo (the NBA coach assaulted by Latrell Sprewell). "I've never been convicted of a crime, but I spent many days in the projects, playing ball 'til two in the morning, then going to a party, y'know, funky and putting some deodorant on in whoever's bathroom." He stops laughing then adds: "And most of my boys headed down the same path as Jake, be it drugs or whatever."

Lee is no doubt betting that audiences will meet him halfway with *He Got Game*. Instead of enlisting an obvious hit maker like Mase or Wu-Tang to record the soundtrack for his film, Lee put his faith in Public Enemy, who are looking to make a comeback of their own. It's the first time these two have hooked up since "Fight the Power," the hard-hitting anthem from *Do the Right Thing*. "Who says black youth just relate to [one type of] hip hop or to gangsta rap. I don't believe that," says Lee. "I'm sorry. No disrespect. I would take A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul over Puff Daddy any day."

PE definitely have Lee's back. "Spike's going to shoot for different perspectives," says Chuck D. "A

lot of new cats will try to do themes that are going to be popular, but Spike's stuff is almost like time-capsule material. It reflects what's happening; goes a little deeper than the eye can see and the ear can hear."

The relationship between Jake and Jesus is a case in point. Over the past few years, mainstream sports stories about "Daddy's Boys (and Girls)" have arrested the public. Golfer Tiger Woods's father, Earl, is the primary influence in his life. In tennis, Venus, Serena, and Richard Williams are tearing competition out the frame. And on the hardwood, Kobe Bryant was schooled by his pops, Joe, an NBA veteran. But rather than use this sort of feel-good model, Lee focuses on how a parent's obsession with their son's game can take a devastating toll on the family. It's a darker approach, but the result may be a story line more of today's youth can identify with.

"I saw the commercials for *He Got Game*. I'm definitely going to see that movie," says Hovoc, 24, of Mobb Deep. "I know it's going to be good. It's about a father coming out of jail, and he's the only one that can help his son. I like that concept."

S eated courtside at Madison Square Garden, Lee's demeanor resembles that of Jordan at the stripe for the front end of two. He's composed, confident, and dressed in his usual uniform: T-shirt, jeans, high-tops—ready. His cap (a striking image of a basketball superimposed on a cross) promotes *He Got Game*.

When his beloved Knicks emerge from the locker room to the pulsating sounds of Rakim's "New York (Ya out There)," Lee comes alive, leaving his seat to exchange pad with passing players. When asked whom his film is tailored to, Lee demurs, scanning the rafters. "I make the films I like to see. If I wanted to draw the biggest audience possible, I wouldn't even cast actors. I'd have every rap motherfucker in the world in the movie, which a lot of people do. But I'm not going to go that route."

"The only film I made that was for a specific audience was *School Daze*," he continues, "because the subject matter was targeted toward the African-American college audience. Everything else I've done, I feel, is for everyone."

The buzzer explodes, and Lee turns his attention back to the court, cheering for his veteran Knicks squad as they go head to head with Ray Allen and a younger, more athletic Milwaukee Bucks team. Who got game? Only time will tell. ☐

Spike's Joints: An inside look at Spike Lee's 40 acres and his mule

FEATURE FILMS:	YEAR:	*BUDGET:	EST. DOMESTIC GROSS:
<i>She's Gotta Have It</i> (Island Pictures)	1986	\$175,000	\$7.1 million
<i>School Daze</i> (Columbia Pictures)	1988	\$3.6 million	\$14.5 million
<i>Do the Right Thing</i> (Universal Pictures)	1989	\$6.5 million	\$27.2 million
<i>Mo' Better Blues</i> (Universal Pictures)	1990	\$10 million	\$16.2 million
<i>Jungle Fever</i> (Universal Pictures)	1991	\$14 million	\$32.5 million
<i>Malcolm X</i> (Warner Bros. Pictures)	1992	\$33 million	\$48.2 million
<i>Crooklyn</i> (Universal Pictures)	1994	\$15 million	\$13.6 million
<i>Clockers</i> (Universal Pictures)	1995	\$25 million	\$13 million
<i>Girl 6</i> (20th Century Fox)	1996	\$12 million	\$4.9 million
<i>Get on the Bus</i> (Columbia Pictures)	1996	\$2.4 million	\$5.7 million
<i>4 Little Girls</i> (HBO Pictures)	1997	\$1.2 million	\$ 130,000
<i>He Got Game</i> (Touchstone Pictures)	1998	\$24 million	N/A

* Does not necessarily include print or advertising costs




GENERATION **NEXT** 

PEPSI, PEPSI NEXT, A WARRIOR ROCKS! and the Next Challenge are trademarks of PepsiCo, Inc.

©2009 PepsiCo, Inc. All rights reserved.



LOADING
ONLY

BIG BLACK TRUCK

buckle up for an
montell jordan's



expedition in
jiggmobile

This is 'my big black truck' that I sing about in 'This Is How We Do It,' " says big Montell Jordan as his '95 GMC Suburban accelerates through slow-moving Los Angeles traffic. At the time of his first single, Jordan's road monster was just a fantasy.

He'd long since graduated from those awkward high school days when his Jheri-curl stained the interior of his parents' white Pinto. But a succession of family compacts (the yellow Chevy Chevette, the burgundy Dodge Omni) proved increasingly uncomfortable as Jordan grew into his six-foot-eight frame.

But once that single hit No.1 (in 1995) and once the debut album of the same name sold 1.3 million copies—and once the \$64,000 loan he'd taken to attend Pepperdine University was paid off—the truck of his dreams drove into his life. "Off the lot, the truck only cost forty thousand, tops," explains Jordan, his size 12 Gucci loafer pressing the gas. "And then another forty to get it all customized."

"Customized" is too tame a word. This vehicle (which he insured for a million bucks) is just plain macked out. There's a TV and VCR with infrared headsets and an onboard video library that includes *The Nutty Professor*—in which Jordan has a cameo—and both *The Godfather* and *Die Hard* trilogies, temperature-controlled cup holders, a mini-humidor stocked with a selection of fine cigars, a digital compass and thermometer mounted on the rearview mirror, leather captain's chairs in front and back, plus invisible speakers cut

into soundproofed walls.

Not all the customizing is for comfort's sake: Jordan invested in a turbocharged engine, Lamborghini brakes, PIAA purple halogen headlamps, and a roof rack for his snowboard. A remote-control ignition starter with a 500-foot range is on his keychain should Jordan need to make a quick getaway, and any thieves scheming on the GMC jiggmobile are sure to be stymied by a security system that can shut off the engine via satellite.

Closer inspection of the sport utility vehicle reveals telling personal details, like the baby seat for Jordan's year-old daughter, Sydney Alexis, and the small Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity pin on the sun visor. In back, a Spalding basketball and an eight-pound blue jump rope sit alongside a Victoria's Secret bag that holds a black-and-red nightie "because you never know when you want to make a lady's day," Jordan says, referring to his wife, Kristen. And of course, the truck's vanity license plate reads: HWE DOIT.

Jordan drives with his left hand, knuckles locked at 12 o'clock on the wheel. With his other hand, he eases his own new CD, *Let's Ride* (Def Jam), into a Sony 10-disc changer (it's been shuffling through Jay-Z, Erykah Badu, and Chico DeBarge). The album's first single, "Let's Ride," is a bumpy cut featuring rhymes from Master P. Is the title an invitation to take a spin in the Suburban? "[The song's not] automotive," Montell says with a grin. "It's more of a sexually charged record—'riding' as in physically being on top of somebody." Sounds like Montell Jordan is ready to reassume pole position in the R&B world. You'd best fasten your seat belt. ■

by peter relic. photographs by b+



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF DUMAS

IT

What would you do if you inherited an infamous rap label with a catalogue of old hits and a fading reputation? Sell it for a handsome profit and run? Not if you're Eazy-E's widow,

By
RJ
Smith

AIN'T

EASY

Tomica Woods-Wright. She's facing down her critics, battling lawsuits, and fighting to make Ruthless Records matter again.

It's been three years since AIDS-related pneumonia choked the life out of Eric "Easy-E" Wright and stoke the breath from his fans. The mourners have long departed; his followers, label mates, lawyers, and nine children have all gone on with their lives. But it's been a little more difficult at the company he built, where only recently has it returned to the business of making records.

At the sunny, new West Los Angeles office of Ruthless Records, a meeting is underway. There's no boardroom vibe here, no boss pounding the table. Thirteen employees, most are in their 20s, pull chairs into a semicircle while the head of Ruthless, 29-year-old Tomica Woods-Wright, sits on a small table along the wall. The five-foot-two exec is dressed in jeans and a baggy sweatshirt; a ponytail hides the Chinese letters tattooed on her neck. She's running things in a casual way, with a soft voice and lo-fi manner.

This year is Ruthless's 10th anniversary, and the discussion centers on a commemorative compilation record—with two unreleased Easy-E tracks—and an upcoming party celebrating the label's reemergence. Everything from the catering to the guest list to the invitations is plotted out, and Woods-Wright makes it clear that she wants this to be a coming out party for a new Ruthless Records.

Since Easy's death, on March 26, 1995, she has had to contend with the special sort of controversy reserved for the widows of dead superstars. Critics suggest that she took advantage of her husband's illness and stole the label while he was on his deathbed—some even hint that she's responsible for his death.

Then there are the legal troubles. In the months after Wright's passing, Woods-Wright fought off a claim to Easy's estate made by the six mothers of seven of his children. (As part of the settlement, a trust fund has been established for all his children.) Woods-Wright settled out of court with Ruthless's former head of business affairs, Mike Klein, a background figure with ties to the Jewish Defense League. And in early 1999, a Los Angeles judge is set to review the biggest lawsuit yet: Jerry Heller, Easy's onetime manager, is claiming more than a million dollars in unpaid fees. Woods-Wright slapped Heller with a countersuit charging him with fraud and misuse of company funds.

With all this drama, it's no wonder Ruthless—estimated to be worth \$15 million at the time of Easy's death—is struggling to regain some of its former glory. In early 1987, Eric Wright founded the company using money he made as a drug dealer on the streets of Compton. Home to the headline-grabbing antics and outrageous hits of N.W.A., the label laid the foundation for Cali gangsta rap and spawned dozens of copycat crews. As good at producing scan-

dals as it was records, Ruthless now looks like the blueprint for Death Row Records, itself a mom-and-pop store of gun-packin' players. Hardcore rap was Job No. 1, but Ruthless also cut gold and platinum discs by hip hop and R&B artists such as J.J. Fad and Michel'le. Wright said he wanted to make the label into a new Motown. He had a vision, but anybody who knew him would say he also made it up as he went along.

The hits slowed down after Ice Cube and Dr. Dre left N.W.A. (in '89 and '91, respectively), and Ruthless looked as if it was becoming little more than letterhead and a back catalog. Easy's postmortem 1996 album, *Snë off the Streets*, moved a modest 499,000 copies compared with the multiplatinum posthumous releases from Tupac and Biggie. Except for the saving grace of Cleveland-based Bone Thugs-N-Harmony—who have sold 13 million records in the past four years—the label hasn't had a gold or platinum record since 1993.

Like the Bone Thugs, Ruthless is now at a crossroads; it's finally seeking new talent but seems uncertain about how to establish itself in a postgangsta era. Meanwhile, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony says they want out. According to rapper Krazie Bone, the group would rather not make another record with the label. "It ain't business; it done turned personal now," says Krazie. "Everything has basically changed since Easy passed away. It just ain't the same. Basically, we like slaves now. [Woods-Wright] worked with Motown before, but that was R&B. Taking over Easy's company, this is something completely different," he adds. "I don't think she knew what she was doing in this game. She still don't know what she's doing."

Behind her desk at Ruthless, Woods-Wright flashes a smirk Easy would have been proud of. "It's being blown up into a personal thing, but I really feel that it isn't," she says. "You can jump up and down, [say] we want out; we're not happy, this and that, but you know, my child can throw a temper tantrum and be mad because I say no, you can't have the candy. It is what it is."

Eric "Easy-E" Wright

Woods-Wright—who as head of her own record company joins the slim ranks of high-profile female executives such as Elektra's Sylvia Rhone, Virgin's Nancy Barry, and Tommy Boy's Monica

No, you are *not* the only artists [on the label]; no, you did not create this company; you do not run this company; and the bottom line is—and the key word is—you are an artist."

She hasn't signed many new acts, Woods-Wright says, because "I wanted to get our house in order and get everything stable so that we could offer the best deal to artists coming to this label. Now, I'm in a position to say, Okay, let's do it."

Let's do what? Last late year, Woods-Wright negotiated a distribution deal with Epic, which gives the label a much higher corporate profile (Ruthless's former distributor, Relativity, will now only handle releases from individual members of Bone). She's built a staff of about 20 employees, including three A&R people, to aggressively recruit new talent. And in the meantime, she's planning releases from N.W.A. alum MC Ren, comic Chris Tucker, and a Dallas-based political rap duo named N/X. Though Ruthless does not disclose any official numbers, Woods-Wright claims the company's healthy and says it grossed \$60 million last year. A spokesperson from Sony music says they are looking forward to doing business with Ruthless and Woods-Wright. "We have had a very successful relationship with Ruthless through the years, and we expect to build on it and enjoy even greater success in the future."

"A lot of people questioned what my experience was in this industry," Woods-Wright says. "They said, 'She got that position by laying on her back.' I'm not angry. I've been in the indus-

Lynch—speaks so softly, and so often ends conversations with a self-conscious "did that make any sense?" that you can easily miss how tough she is.

try long enough to see different sides of it; so I understand it. I'm new to this position, to handling this much responsibility, but I'm not new to seeing the game and how it's run—and really, how people are."

Tomica Woods first met Easy-E at a cavernous Downtown L.A. nightclub in early 1991. She was talking with friends when one of Easy-E's bodyguards gently got her attention. "Easy would like to meet you," the hulk said. "Who's Easy?" was how she played it. When the man pointed across the room to somebody who wasn't any taller than Woods, she said, "That's fine. No, thank you."

When the rapper strode over and introduced himself, she cut him off at the knees. "Don't you have a real name?" she needed. He laughed it off and vowed they would meet again. She shook her head and replied: "I don't think so."

But their paths kept crossing, and eventually he wore her down. She'd tell friends she was lunching with a notorious gangsta rapper; if she didn't return promptly, she joked, they should notify the authorities. "He was just very down-to-earth, sweet, nice. We'd laugh together when I got to know him a little better. And from then on, it was just... history."

Woods grew up in a stormy situation, sometimes living with her mom in one town, then with



her father in another. For a time, she lived in a foster home; she doesn't like to go into details. Woods went to high school in the San Fernando Valley and attended Santa Monica and West L.A. community colleges before eventually getting a job as secretary to Clarence Avant at Tabu, a production company that handled Cherrell, Alexander O'Neal, and the S.O.S. Band. When Avant went to Motown in 1993, he took Woods with him.

Part of the attraction Woods felt toward Eazy-E was that he wasn't making tremendous demands on her. She had already had a child from a relationship that did much, she says today, to damage her self-respect. Then, at a moment when she was desperate, Woods earned money posing nude for an adult magazine. "I've had a Vanessa Williams experience," she says. "I was *underage*. Things and circumstances happen. I'm not ashamed, but at the same time, it's not how I got here."

As head of her own record company, Woods-Wright joins the slim ranks of high-profile female executives such as Elektra's Sylvia Rhone, Virgin's Nancy Barry, and Tommy Boy's Monica Lynch. She speaks so softly, and so often ends conversations with a self-conscious "Did that make any sense?" that you can easily miss how tough she is.

"She's beautiful and she's ruthless and she's bright," says Avant. "I admire people like that. Her family life has not been A-plus, B- or C-plus. She's from the street, with a lot of street knowledge. But if she went to Harvard, it wouldn't make any difference. She'd still be the same person. Tomica can see along ways in front of her. She's learned a lot of things that I did, and she's put them into practice."

But there are those who question her executive training. "She was his *secretary*," sneers Jerry Heller. But Woods-Wright says that at Tabu she studied the finer points of Avant's deal-making methodology firsthand. "I got both sides. I got one from being under Clarence's wing, and I got the street side of it by being with Eric."

The street seminar she got from Eazy allowed an up close look at the inner workings of Ruthless and at Jerry Heller, who, she says, was mishandling label business. She began to complain about Heller to Eazy early on. "We talked about things—you know what I'm saying?" says Woods-Wright of her time with Eazy. "It wasn't just like you come over at two o'clock in the morning, and we sleep with each other, and you leave, and we have no conversation. It was a *relationship*."

And a pretty complicated relationship at that. They had two children together: a son, Dominick, and a daughter, Daijah. Eazy owned a pair of houses, one a few doors down from Heller and another near his mom in Norwalk, where he spent a lot of time hanging with his boys. He moved by night, and Woods didn't always know where he was in the early morning hours. Maybe she didn't want to know. "There were times when I would kind of get a feeling, like, Are you seeing someone?" she says today. "He covered his bases, and his angles."

Jerry Heller sees it from his own angle. "I always said pussy would be his downfall."

Dogs are howling in four different octaves over at Heller's Calabasas, California mansion. Heller loves dogs, and they seem to be running things this morning while he repairs to a room where he keeps old photographs. In his 33-year career, the 57-year-old, white-haired music man has worked with everyone from Pink Floyd to Elton John, and he isn't shy about taking credit for the success of others.

He numgums through his pictures and produces a weathered 1960s portrait with old school garage rockers the Standells (who look like *Austin Powers* extras); then a picture of Eazy and Tomica vacationing in Honolulu with Heller and his wife Gayle in 1991; and finally, one of Eazy, Dre, and others celebrating Heller's 50th birthday.

Heller has a photographic memory of the first time he met Eazy-E. The rapper had heard about the record-biz veteran hanging out on the periphery of L.A.'s fledgling hip hop scene, and he offered a middleman \$750 to set up a meeting. When Heller and Wright were introduced, Wright pulled the money out of his sock and paid the guy on the spot.

Jerry Heller (in red), his wife, and a friend lounging in Honolulu with Eazy and Tomica, 1991



Forever Ruthless

'87	EAZY-E, "Boyz-n-the-Hood"	500,000
	N.W.A. <i>NWA and the Posse (reissued in 1989)</i>	GOLD
	E.F. F.U. <i>Supersonic</i>	PLATINUM
	J.J. F.U. <i>"Supersonic"</i>	GOLD
'88	J.J. F.U. <i>"Way Out"</i>	NO. 1 ALBUM
	EAZY-E, <i>Eazy-D-I-0</i>	2X PLATINUM
	EAZY-E, <i>"We Want Eazy"</i>	196,500
	N.W.A. <i>Straight Outta Compton</i>	2X PLATINUM
'89	N.W.A. <i>"Express Yourself"</i>	145,500
	THE D.O.C., <i>No One Can Do It Better</i>	PLATINUM
	THE D.O.C., <i>"It's Funky Enough"</i>	N/A*
	J.J. F.U. <i>Not Just a Fad</i>	N/A*
	N.W.A. <i>100 Miles and Runnin' (EP)</i>	PLATINUM
	N.W.A. <i>"100 Miles and Runnin'"</i>	N/A*
	MICHELLE, <i>Michelle</i>	GOLD
'90	MICHELLE, <i>"No More Lies"</i>	GOLD
	MICHELLE, <i>"Nasty"</i>	N/A*
	ABOVE THE LAW, <i>Live! Like Mothers</i>	200,000
	AFRIK LANS, <i>"Puddles of H²O"</i>	N/A*
	TAIBBEI B., <i>The Power of a Woman</i>	10,000
	TAIBBEI B., <i>"Swingin' Wit' It"</i>	N/A*
	N.W.A. <i>EPLAZAGGIN</i>	1.8 MILLION
	MICHELLE, <i>"Something in My Heart"</i>	233,000
	MICHELLE, <i>"It"</i>	19,000
	ABOVE THE LAW, <i>Vocally Pimpin'</i>	75,000
'91	JIMMY J., <i>Marshall Madness</i>	3,000
	BRAND Y., <i>"Funky Fresh"</i>	500
	YOMO & MAULXIE, <i>Are U Experienced?</i>	14,000
	YOMO & MAULXIE, <i>"Mama Don't"</i>	600
	YOMO & MAULXIE, <i>"Gloxy"</i>	600
	YOMO & MAULXIE, <i>"Mockingbird"</i>	400
	EAZY-E, <i>\$150 Home 4 The Sick (EP)</i>	411,000
	MC REN, <i>Kaz My Black Azz</i>	40,000
'92	PENTHOUSE PLAYERS CLIQUE, <i>Paid the Cost</i>	173,000
	PENTHOUSE PLAYERS CLIQUE, <i>"Explanation of a Playa"</i>	21,000
	PO' BROKE N LONELY, <i>"Funky Vibe"</i>	1,000
	EAZY-E, <i>It's On (Dr. Dre 187 um Killa (EP)</i>	1.5 MILLION
	EAZY-E, <i>"Real Muthaphukkin' G"</i>	317,000
'93	ABOVE THE LAW, <i>Black Mafia Life</i>	175,000
	ABOVE THE LAW, <i>"S.O.P."</i>	22,000
	MC REN, <i>Shack of the Hour</i>	321,000
	ABOVE THE LAW, <i>Uncle Sam's Curse</i>	236,000
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>Crown on an Come Up</i>	2.3 MILLION
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>"Thuggin' Ruggish Bone"</i>	530,000
	FRUST, <i>Smile Now, Die Later</i>	203,000
	H.W.A. (Hoot With Attitude), <i>Are Much As Azz U Want</i>	38,000
'94	KOKANE, <i>Funk Upon a Ryme</i>	67,000
	KOKANE, <i>"Slow Burn" 22 5 Fahrenheit</i>	13,000
	RYKANE, <i>"Baker Soda Free"</i>	1,000
	MENAIHTWA, <i>Chic-Licious</i>	8,100
	MC REN, <i>"Same Ol' Shit"</i>	42,300
	STEFFON, <i>Tippin' Wit' No Luggage</i>	1,100
	PSYLOL, <i>Hittin' Like a Bullet</i>	7,600
	PO' BROKE N LONELY, <i>"Twisted"</i>	16,000
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>"1st of Tha Month"</i>	381,000
'95	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>E, 1999 Eternal</i>	5 MILLION
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>"The Love of \$"</i>	206,000
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>"East 1999"</i>	179,000
	TAB N DA VILLAIN, <i>Do or Die</i>	5,000
	EAZY-E, <i>Shit Off the Streets of Muthaphukkin' Compton</i>	499,000
	EAZY-E, <i>"Just Th! Let U Know"</i>	272,000
'96	MC REN, <i>The Villain in Black</i>	124,000
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>"The Crossroads"</i>	2 MILLION
	BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY, <i>The Art of War</i>	1.4 MILLION
'97	FRUST, <i>"What's Your Name (Time of the Season)"</i>	30,000
	FROST, <i>When Hell A. Freezes Over</i>	57,000
'98	OTIS TUCKER	TO BE RELEASED
	BU. ROGE	
	RELIGHT	

* Some figures not available through SoundScan or the Recording Industry Association of America. Reported by Shelby Jefferson



Whether you're steppin' to the ladies or kickin' it with your boys, you want your hair looking good. So if your hair is short or long, Luster's New S-Curl Hair Dress leaves hair easy to comb, controls flaking, and adds sheen to keep your headz in the game.

keepin' headz in the game.

INTRODUCING NEW S-CURL HAIR DRESS



Get your head in the game and a Vibe magazine subscription for only \$6.00, with your purchase of S-Curl Texturizer! Available while supplies last.

© 1992 Luster Products Inc.
Chicago, IL 60609



www.lusterproducts.com

Ruthless All-Stars: J.J. Fad



The D.O.C.



Eazy and Bone Thugs



N.W.A



Early in 1987, the two discussed going into business. "He offered me fifty percent of everything," Heller says, shaking his head in disbelief. When you don't have much, 50 percent doesn't amount to much; but Heller says he took the high road. "I said, Well, that isn't the way we're going to do it. Here's the way we're going to do it: I'm going to take twenty percent. And out of my twenty percent, if we sell a lot of records, I'm going to make a lot of money. You get eighty percent; you pay the expenses. If we ever sell the company later on, I'd get twenty percent of the proceeds of that."

Woods-Wright says that "[Eazy] gave Jerry credit for showing him the way and enabling him to knock on certain doors. But then I also know that at a later point he was kind of hurt to know the deceit that was there. Money was missing; business relationships were being damaged." Woods-Wright blames Heller for Eazy's signing documents before reading them first.

Heller, however, points a picture of Eazy as a fast-and-loose player who never scanned the fine print, an artist who no promised girls he'd sign them to Ruthless ("Sure, just see Jerry tomorrow"). "I'd show up at work in the morning and there'd be an office full of people," explains Heller. "There'd be a guy with a script, someone else who was selling Eazy status of monsters, three girls that were 'signed' to the company, fourteen lawyers. My job was to then sit them down and tell them the realities." Heller's job, he says, was to be "a buffer" for Eazy.

Heller says he was pushed out by Woods-Wright and others who were trying to get a piece of Eazy's wealth. Heller contends that the money owed him today includes a percentage made by groups signed while he was at Ruthless—most importantly, Bone Thugs. ("I signed Bone," he declares.) He also says he deserves a cut of the money made on the new distribution deal with Epic. Heller's lawyers demanded Ruthless's documents to find out how much Epic paid. Woods-Wright will not disclose figures but did discount one rumor—which priced the deal at \$60 million—as laughably high.

The Epic deal perhaps unofficially began in 1989, when Woods-Wright, as assistant to Avant, first met Ronald Sweeney, an entertainment attorney working for Tabu. A few years later, when Woods and the rapper were dating, Sweeney became Eazy's attorney, representing his entertainment interests. Their first deal together, says Sweeney, involved marketing an Eazy-E video game for a game company that Sweeney owned. In the last year of Eazy's life, Woods-Wright says Sweeney and the rapper

traveled to New York City and met with Sony execs to discuss a new distribution deal.

Sweeney's relationship with Eazy deepened. When the rapper was dying, he named Sweeney and Woods as coexecutors of his estate. Then, four months after Eazy passed, Sweeney was named executive vice president of Black Music at Epic. Thus, the attorney who started out representing Ruthless in negotiations with Sony was working as a high-level employee at Sony-owned Epic. Until all legal claims are settled, Sweeney remains with Woods-Wright as coexecutor of Eazy's estate.

"To the extent that Ruthless made a deal, I had input," Sweeney explains. "But to the extent that they had a deal with Sony, I had to step back somewhat." That statement illustrates the delicate position he placed himself in; for Sweeney, there's no single answer to questions about which side he was working for.

Woods-Wright acknowledges Sweeney's input, but she dismisses any criticism of the deal. "People can perceive things how they want to," she says. "In this business, somebody always knows somebody."

Heller contends that Woods-Wright and Sweeney never had Eazy's best interests in mind and plans to see they don't get all of his money. One potential sticking point for Heller's lawsuit is that he doesn't have any clear-cut contract spelling out his relationship with Eazy-E. "Some of the most successful relationships in the music business have been on a handshake," Heller says. Now he has to convince the judge just what his relationship was.

It was Heller who brought the mysterious Mike Klein to Ruthless Records at a moment when Ruthless's future seemed at stake. Heller had known Klein since the mid-'80s, when Klein ran a garment business near Heller's office.

Back in 1991, when Dre was leaving Ruthless for Death Row, Suge Knight reportedly used baseball bats and pipes to persuade Eazy-E to release Dre from his Ruthless contract. It was life during wartime; heated threats were coming from the general direction of Death Row, and Heller was worried enough to bring in Klein to provide additional security.

"A lot of people said, 'She got that position by laying on her back,'" says Woods-Wright. "I'm not angry. I've been in the industry long enough to see different sides of it; so I

Klein was a textbook in self-defense; he's probably one of the few people on Earth who can claim close friends in both the militant Jewish Defense League and the Nation of Islam. Before he moved to Los Angeles, says someone who knows him, the Israeli-born Klein "led a commando raid into southern Lebanon when they caught those guys that blew up the kibbutz kids on the school bus."

"That's stuff I can't comment on," Klein says today. "I can't tell you if it's true or not." Klein did take Ruthless employees to firing ranges to learn defensive techniques. You can't really say he armed the label, however. "Everybody had their own guns, including me," explains Heller. Klein tapped the Jewish Defense League to help protect Ruthless in 1989. He also set up face-to-face meetings with Suge Knight. Heller and Eazy had been meeting with Suge to work things out, says Heller, but once Klein sat in the whole mood changed. "He made that situation go away."

After he came to Ruthless and secured the perimeter, Klein set his sights higher. At a moment when Ruthless was having some cash flow problems, Klein put money into the label and kept it alive, according to one source. Eventually, Klein cut a deal with Eazy-E—another deal that apparently wasn't put on paper—making him head of business affairs. Soon, a man with no previous experience in the music industry was helping negotiate Ruthless's distribution deal with Atlantic.

But all sides admit he served a purpose. Klein provided "moods and tactics when you talked to people," Tomica Woods-Wright says. "For instance, going in to do business with a Bryan Turner or a Jimmy Iovine. Just being irate, being very boisterous,

understand it. I'm new to this position, to handling this much responsibility, but I'm not new to seeing the game and how it's run."

and trying to give an intimidating presence in order to get things done—and maybe not always [with] business tactics."

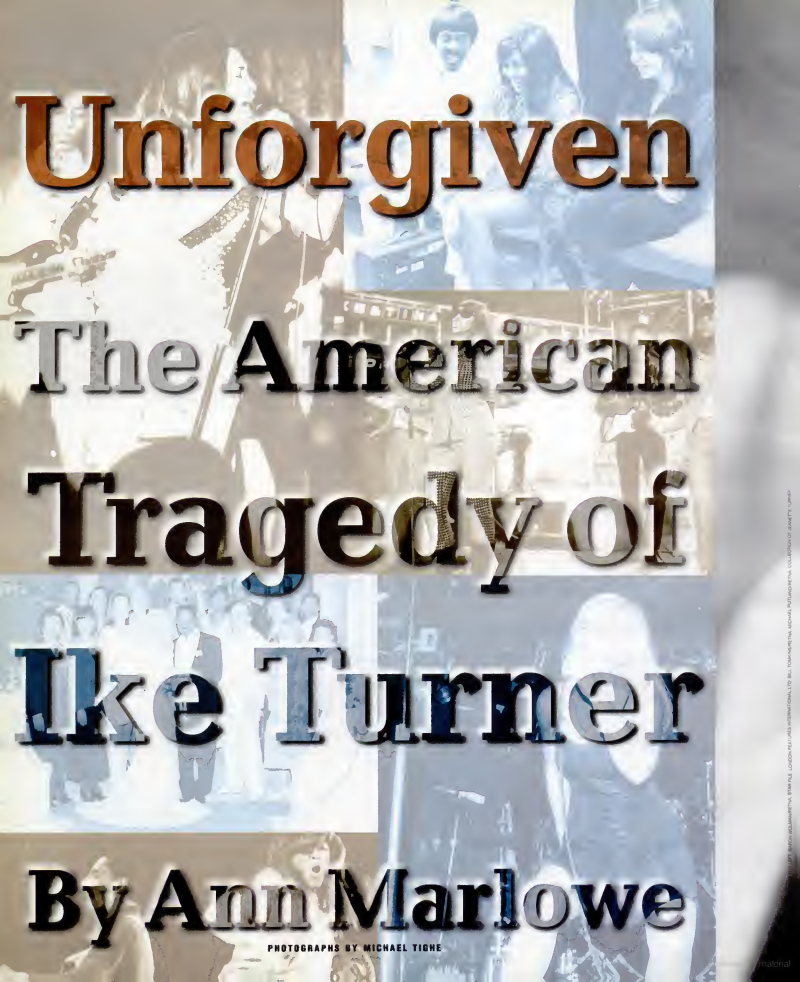
A couple months before Eazy-E entered the hospital, before anyone knew how sick he was, a power struggle erupted. Woods, Klein, and Sweeney were all encouraging the rapper to fire Heller, sources say, which he did via letter. Heller's attorney disputes the authenticity of this letter, which he claims was found only after Wright's death. But Klein, at least, did not savor the spoils for long. After Wright died, Klein was relieved of his duties at Ruthless; he

(continued on page 178)

A close-up, low-angle shot of a hand pouring Gatorade from a bottle into the open mouth of a person. The bottle is tilted, and the liquid is captured mid-pour, creating a dynamic sense of motion. The lighting is warm and focused on the bottle and the person's face, with the background being dark and out of focus. The Gatorade label is clearly visible, showing the brand name and the 'Fruit Punch' flavor.

PUT IT BACK
THE WAY YOU
GAVE IT UP.





Unforgiven The American Tragedy of Ike Turner

By Ann Marlowe

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL TIGHE



When people talk about rock 'n' roll, they talk about Chuck Berry, they talk about Little Richard, and they leave the main man out.... Ike Turner was the innovator for rhythm and blues and for rock 'n' roll. To me, Ike is one of the most underrated entertainers in the world.—Little Richard, 1997

Well, I learned a lesson / To treat my loved ones right / 'Cause there's nothing but troubles and heartaches / When you fuss and fight.—Ike Turner, "Troubles and Heartaches," 1952

If Ike Turner were to die today, most people would remember him as the cartoonish villain of 1993's *What's Love Got to Do With It*. Few people recall that in 1991, while in jail for a coke rap, Ike was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Like many other black American geniuses, Turner has been written out of the history he helped create.

In 1951, at age 20, Turner wrote and played piano on "Rocket 88," often called the first rock 'n' roll song. More than any other musician, he pioneered the expressive capabilities of the guitar. In 1956 (the year he met Tina), Ike played what might be the first rock guitar solo—scaring 20-second-long guests relying on drastic manipulations of the whammy bar.

It could be argued that Ike Turner is the most direct link between the American blues tradition and British guitarists like Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, and Keith Richards. Ike was also one of the first bandleaders to use the electric bass, to use two lead guitarists, to use a drum machine and synthesizer in the studio.... The list goes on. In the words of producer Roli Mosimann (Faith No More, The The), "You can hear almost all of '80s funk, including Prince, in [Ike and Tina Turner's 1973] 'Nutbush City Limits.'"

Tina Turner is a household name today, but 40 years ago she was Annie Mae Bullock, an occasional vocalist with Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm. Ike wrote the couple's first hit, "Fool in Love," in 1960. During the late '60s, the Ike and Tina Turner Revue was the greatest live show on the planet, sharing bills with, and upstaging, the Rolling Stones. In 1976, Tina left Ike and a life of abuse behind, only to make a triumphant return in 1985 with the multiplatinum solo album *Private Dancer*.

The release of *What's Love Got to Do With It* brought Ike notoriety but not respect. The movie, an exaggerated version of Tina's 1986 autobiography, *I, Tina*, deliberately obscured his viewpoint. Laurence Fishburne initially turned down the part of Ike four times, accepting it only when the script was revised "to make Ike more human." Even so, the film depicts Ike raping his wife and brutally beating her in public. Tina's book describes such abuses, but in slightly sketchier terms; Ike denies they ever happened. "Yeah, I hit her," Ike told SPIN magazine in response to the question of spousal abuse. "But I didn't hit her more than the average guy beat his wife."

Turner blames the film, more than his own actions, for destroying his career. As its impact has grown from theatrical release to HBO to video, gigs have dried up; public perceptions hardened. "The worst mistake I ever made in my life," he says, "was when I signed an agreement not to sue Disney. They offered me fifteen thousand later where I could get it right away and thirty thousand later. You offer a guy who's doing coke money right away, and what's he going to say?"

Ike spent the '70s and most of the '80s on a cocaine

bender, smoking up his hard-earned fortune to the tune of \$2,000 a day. Among the talented friends who partied or recorded inside Bolic Sound—Ike's state-of-the-art studio at 1310 La Brea in Inglewood, California—were Sly Stone, Little Richard, and Bobby Womack. "There was a little silver box on the console with cocaine," recalls trombonist Jeffrey Deane. "Ike would try to engage you into snorting cocaine and then laugh at you when you couldn't play the parts. There was an upstairs at Bolic through a secret door. I went up there once; it was night out of *Superfly*, everything was white, with oval doors. There was a plastic bag with the largest amount of cocaine I'd ever seen in my life—at least a pound."

The permanent party at Bolic Sound came to an abrupt end when the temporarily uninsured building

Ike because he had been so good to me [in the early days].... I felt his pain because he had wanted so badly to be a star.... I don't have a vengeance. It would be wonderful if Ike could get a hit record and really realize his dream on his own."

I don't feel as odd as I should being the third wheel at Ike and Jeanette Turner's second wedding anniversary dinner on July 4, 1997. But after a few nights hanging out with the Turners at their San Marcos, California house, it's clear that Ike needs an attentive audience more than he needs privacy.

The only special preparation is resolutely unromantic: We drove an hour and a half north to Los Angeles yesterday so Jeanette could get her hair recolored. "They messed it up down here," Ike explained.

"They turned it black"—although the roots showing through were Jeanette's natural auburn. Today, her delicate, Barbie-doll features and clear white skin are once again framed by a platinum blond mane.

This day is special for Jeanette. Now 36, she hasn't had the kind of life wherein "happily ever after" is the expected ending. She did time in juvenile hall and mentions, ruefully, that most of the crowd she grew up with in St. Louis are now dead or in jail. After being together eight years, Ike and Jeanette were married on the spur of the moment at Las Vegas's Circus Circus Hotel and Casino. She bought her traditional white gown the day of the ceremony. The small reception was held at the Las Vegas Hilton International, where Ike gets the free rooms offered to high rollers. In the reception photos, Jeanette has changed into a mink-trimmed black leather bustier and black skirt that scream show business.

Ike, now 66, met Jeanette through his son Ike Jr. She was singing with a band like Ike took to Los Angeles to shop for a record deal. "Ike first took me to meet his father in 1988," Jeanette says softly. "Ike was sitting around a table with six women, and they were all on the pipe. These women were just sitting around the table wearing T-shirts. Nothing else."

Ike Jr. soon abandoned Jeanette and the band's other female singer, Jeanette moved in with Ike and became a crack user too; although Jeanette had dabbled in recreational drugs as a teenager, she never expected to be drawn into L.A.'s hardcore crack scene. She returned to St. Louis a few months later to kick her habit. By that time, Ike was in jail for the 11th and last time at the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo for coke possession. During his term, they corresponded, and they've lived together since his release, in September 1991. "I've never been into younger guys," says Jeanette of their 31-year age difference. "I felt I was more mature."

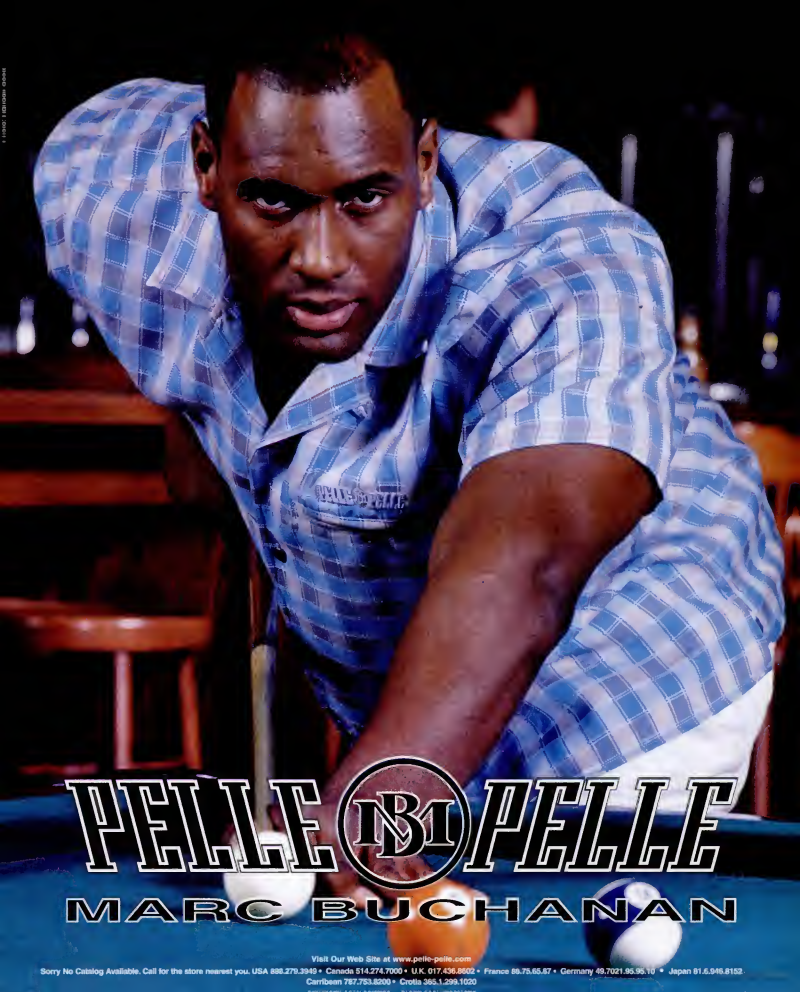
The Turners' house is a comfortable three-bedroom, two-car-garage ranch covered in gray siding with sky-blue trim. Their front yard differs from the neighbors' only in hinting that they take no inter-

Ike and Jeanette Turner



burned to the ground in 1982. Ike's music output had been in decline since Tina left him in 1976; his studio work became directionless, and he endlessly reworked songs that never came out. The fire accelerated his downward spiral—freebase, freebase. Between cocaine and tobacco, Ike smoked so much that he gave himself emphysema, which put him in the hospital in 1994. He no longer drinks, smokes, or does drugs, and credits prison for saving his life.

In a culture that glosses over Elvis's abusive behavior toward women, you have to wonder whose agenda is being served by anointing Ike Turner the poster boy for domestic violence. Tina herself seems to think things have gone too far. During an *Oprah* appearance in February 1997, she said, "I was very loyal to



PELLE PELLE

MARC BUCHANAN

Visit Our Web Site at www.pelle-pelle.com

Sorry No Catalog Available. Call for the store nearest you. USA 888.279.3949 • Canada 514.274.7000 • U.K. 017.436.8602 • France 89.75.65.87 • Germany 89.7021.95.95.10 • Japan 81.6.946.8152
Caribbean 787.733.8200 • Croatia 365.1.299.1020

est in gardening. It's past 1 a.m. when Ike and Jeanette greet me on the doorstep in their pajamas. The nubly white wall-to-wall carpet, white walls, and bland furniture are reminiscent of an upscale chain hotel—not surprising, given that Ike spent decades living on the road. Except for the oversize photos in every room—of Ike playing guitar—the art looks like it came from a hotel too.

Jeanette offers to make me a snack, and I look around while she prepares a plate of cheddar cheese and Ritz crackers. Wonderbread awaits on a speltz kitchen counter; in the living room, a well-used Bible sits on the coffee table. It's open to Romans 12:20, and a verse catches my eye: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

The granddaughter whose cute face gazes out from a dining-room wall is the child of a daughter Ike didn't know he had until a few years ago. Twana Melby, 35, is a Highway Patrolwoman and musician whose mom was one of Ike's numerous girlfriends in his St. Louis days. "I had the keys to thirty-two women's apartments then," Ike confides.

Jeanette says none of the boys Ike and Tina raised call him on birthdays or holidays; at least one has had substance-abuse problems. But Ike and Tina's most dramatic failure may be Michael. "He's downtown in San Diego with the homeless," Ike says one night, sounding exasperated. "Normally, where he sleeps, it's on the sidewalk. He's got a tent. I went looking for him, and his tent was gone." Michael was in jail in San Diego yet again.

Although they haven't spoken in a decade, Ike mentions Tina in almost every long conversation. Some of his dwelling on the subject is natural—they were together 17 years—but some feels obsessive.

One of the reasons for Ike's distance from his sons lies in the 340 shows he and Tina played annually. "I gave my kids everything but me," he says, voice raised. "I gave 'em every week a hundred bucks apiece, man—money to go to Disneyland or wherever you want to fucking go, but I didn't go with them. But you know what? If I had to live my life over again, I would live it the same fucking way 'cause either they going to be short of one thing or the other."

Like his estranged sons, Tina is an absent presence in his life. Although they haven't spoken in a decade, Ike mentions her in almost every long conversation. Some of Ike's dwelling on the topic of Tina is natural—they were together 17 years—but some feels obsessive.

Ironically, one reason for the eclipse of Ike's own music reputation is the consummate artistry with which he crafted Tina's on-stage persona. When we hear her lament (on "Fool in Love"), "Why does he treat me so bad when he's such a good man?" we assume she is attacking her stage partner Ike. Tina sings so well, we forget that Ike wrote the words and directed her phrasing. We forget that the gender battles Ike and Tina's music dramatize are fueled by a racial drama larger than any one marriage.

The demonization of Ike Turner began long before the world knew anything about his private life. With his dark skin, flashy clothes, badass attitude, and Deep

South inflections, Ike's very being plugs into the fear nodes of the American psyche. His former producer, the late Ralph Bass, a white man best known for signing James Brown, termed Ike "the blackest of black men."

"The only two kinds of people that can do what they want in this country is a white man and a black woman," Ike often says. "When I heard about Rosa Parks, I didn't pay it no mind. Now, if a black man had refused to sit in the back of the bus and lived to tell, that would be something."

Twelve years ago, Ike said in an interview, "It's very hard to deal with black women mentally. It's like you have to put some fear in them to communicate." During my visit, he insisted that, unlike Tina, Jeanette understood everything he said the first time he told her. "I've never hit her—but if I needed to, I would."

Born in Clarksdale, Mississippi, on November 5, 1931, Ike grew up in the Depression's harshest years, in the nation's poorest state. His dad, a Baptist minister, was beaten severely by white cops for a fling with a black woman one cop was dating and was refused admission to the white-only hospital. As a five-year-old boy, Ike brought his dad meals in a tent built by the Health Department in the backyard when the family couldn't stand the smell of his putrefying inards. Izeal Luster Turner died over a two-year period from damage to his internal organs.

His mother made a poor choice when she remarried. Phillip Reese, a housepainter, seems to have been

an abusive alcoholic. "He only hit me one time, with some barbed wire," says Ike. "I built a playhouse in the backyard. I put a stove in there and a chimney, and it wasn't very safe. He saw the smoke come up there, and he beat my butt. He was right."

Like many abused children, Ike tries to justify his treatment, never noting that hitting a nine-year old with barbed wire might be disproportionate punishment. "He was in the house taking the ashes out of the stove, and I walked up behind him with a two-by-four and knocked him out. I thought I'd killed him, but I didn't. I ran off and went to Memphis. I took my bicycle and grabbed ahold to a truck."

All of this comes out very calm, and Ike isn't a calm person. He allows himself more emotion about bad drivers than about traumatic events from his childhood. The brutal time and place that shaped Ike's character have made him who he is: a tragic figure imprisoned by the need to never show weakness.

Asking questions about Ike's sensational past (women, drugs, gambling) isn't the way to learn who he really is—precisely because he invites you to do it. He's happy to shock new acquaintances ("I got a hole in my nose big enough to put this fork through it," but it's the small weaknesses of Ike's day-to-day life that are of real interest.

Take his habit of sleeping with the bedroom door

open, even when visitors are in the house. "Ike always done that," says his longtime drummer Scott Richardson, laughing. "That's just so he can watch what's going on with other people."

The Turners have lived a half hour from the Mexican border for almost five years, but they have visited Mexico exactly once, for a day. After almost 30 years in L.A., Ike first entered the ocean in 1992. He takes his evening stroll along the boardwalk in Carlsbad, but it doesn't last a minute longer than the allotted 20. There's no gazing out at the setting sun, no wandering onto the sand to feel it between his toes. One lovely afternoon while Jeanette and I headed for the beach, Ike stayed at home. "I don't need to get any blaker than this," he said.

Ike spends most of every day in his digital home studio, sometimes jamming for 10 or 12 hours at a stretch. During my stay, he was up until dawn several times, then rose a few hours later to continue his labors. When he's playing, Ike is free of the sadness and impatience that dog him. Absorbed in the moment, he moves between the computer and the keyboards, his guitar slung over his shoulder, not even looking at the frets as he plays and sings covers and his own hits in a gravelly voice.

No matter what he plays, Ike's genius shines through. Each of the covers swings more than the original; Ike has an unparalleled ability to lock a band into a deep groove and then create intricate counter-rhythms around it. And everything he himself plays has drive and swagger. On a good day, he is one of the greatest guitarists in the world—again.

But Ike is also one of the most infamous black men in America, and if he protests against his fate, it's indirectly. "We got more to offer other than rap and call women bitches and shoot each other and shit like that," he says. "We got a lot of talent. We very creative. And I don't want to die and leave 'em thinking that's all we're qualified at doing." It's easy to forget that Ike has been cast as the ultimate dangerous black male—a woman-battering pistol-packing crack-binging ex-con, referenced by the late Biggie Smalls in "Dreams" as an misogynist hero: "Slap Tina Turner / Give her flashbacks of Ike."

Driving near the Turners' home on the last night of my visit, Ike stops the car suddenly as a rabbit is caught in its headlights. Improbably white and soft, the rabbit stares at the light, a little too close to the center to avoid being hit. "That rabbit is there every time I come this way," Ike comments. I am astonished that this legendary badass would notice the small, vulnerable creature.

But deep down, Ike has a lot in common with that rabbit. It took a very scared boy to make a man like Ike Turner. He half admits it himself. "I can't stand rejection. I would never walk up and say, 'Hey, can I have this dance?' Cause if you say no, I would go through the floor. And the same thing when I go onstage—I could probably do a better show than I do, man, if I could just relax and do it." But Ike worries about how well the other band members will perform. Like so many of us, he is his own worst enemy.

"That rabbit has a death wish," I observe. Ike's tough-guy persona slips back into place: "Especially the way I drive." □

Every Weeknight...

MTV

LATENIGHT
ENTERTAINMENT TALK
WITH STYLE!

Host:
Sinbad

COLUMBIA TRISTAR



TELEVISION DISTRIBUTION
TELEVISION ADVERTISER SALES
a SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT Company

The Leader In Young Adult Programming.™

A full-page photograph of a man in black swim trunks performing a backflip into a swimming pool. He is upside down in the air, with his arms and one leg extended upwards. The pool is in the foreground, and a modern building with large windows and a flat roof is in the background. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a clear sky.

V FASHION

splash

Hot fun in the summer time is all about a swimming pool, party people, and a panoramic view of the City of Angels. *Photographs by Dewey Nicks. Styling by Emil Wilbekin*

OPPOSITE: Blue nylon boardshorts with lime green trim by Club Sportswear. Looking Good: Bio Sun Oil Free Gel in SPF 30; Total Exposure Dark Tanning Oil

THIS PAGE: Blue nylon embroidered logo shorts by Verso. Looking Good: Hawaiian Tropic



Blue and lime green poly/cotton poplin
print indo boardshorts by Counter Cul-
ture; slides by Vans; sunglasses by
Mossimo Optic. Looking Good: Bain de
Soleil Extended Protection Sunblock,
SPF 30





White, yellow, and orange cotton short-sleeve T-shirt by Moss; orange and white buttercloth floral-print boardshorts by Quiksilver; punch-colored spandex one-piece swimsuit by Diesel; white and red polyamide and elastic two-piece bathing suit by Moschino Mare; red and white nylon shorts by Girl Star. Looking Good: Hawaiian Tropic Golden Tanning Lotion with Sunscreen in SPF 6; Neutrogena Oil-Free Sunblock in SPF 15



Red poliamide and elastic bikini with white lettering by Moschino Mare; red and white cotton bamboo print skirt by Gail Bhat; pastel multicolored acetate and Lycra bikini by Amaya Arzuaga; orange nylon boardshorts by TAGRAG; white cotton sweater with blue chest stripe by LEVEL 7; denim floral blue and white boardshorts by Quiksilver; navy poliamide and elastic bikini with white trim and gold hearts by Moschino Mare; patchwork-print multicolored cotton bermuda shorts Roxy by Roxy by Quiksilver; Looking Good: Bain de Soleil Orange Gelée with sunfilter in SPF 4 and Bain de Soleil Extended Protection Sunblock in SPF 15

Brown cotton peasant-print short-sleeve shirt by Golcha; navy blue polyester shirt with zipper by TAGRAG; white cotton twill pants by Nautica by David Chu; hat by Club Sportswear, Looking Good; Hawaiian Tropic Aloe After Sun Moisturizer. SEE THE DETAILS



A full-page photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a black two-piece bikini. She is standing with her legs slightly apart, looking off to the side. The background is a dense pattern of small, white, leaf-like shapes falling against a dark, textured backdrop.

STYLE

Golden Girls

In Hollywood, it's all about becoming a star. When you pack up, leave your family, and set out for a life as an actress, you better be ready to take it there—and Elise Neal, Sanaa Lathan, Idalis León, and Kenya Moore are shooting stars with the shiniest futures. Take a long, hard look as they show off the season's sexiest bikinis.

By Mimi Valdés

Photographs by

Lorenzo Agius.

Styling by

Emil Wilbekin

OPPOSITE: Elise Neal spent hours watching Shirley Temple while growing up in Memphis, Tennessee. "I just kind of got into wanting to be moving, and by the time I was eighteen, I was a dancer living in New York," she says. When Neal made the transition to acting, it was hard for her to keep still. "All my early camera work looks like a blur! It was a challenge to portray an emotion without movement!" With her acclaimed roles in 1997's *Rosewood* and last winter's *Scream 2*, as well as her soon-to-be-taped sitcom pilot for ABC and a feature film role in the interracial love story *Restaurant*, Neal is always aware of her Hollywood goals. "I look at everything I do from a sisterhood perspective—how do I show a strong black woman? I want to make an important statement 'cause my family in Tennessee will not understand anything else." *Black taffel, kurex, nylon, and spandex moon-dust triangle bikini with Brazilian pant by Mossimo Swims; shoes by Stephane Kélan*



ABOVE: If you want to watch a rising star, keep your eyes on *Sareep Lathan*. This Yale School of Drama graduate has got mad beauty, brains, and determination. "I'm proud of graduating from Yale. I worked real hard, and I'm in debt because of it," says the Harlem native, laughing. "But it was an investment." Lathan, who plays Wesley Snipes's vampire mom in *Blade* (set for release in August), has also completed six episodes of *Lafeline*, an NBC half-hour comedy. She's currently filming *Lila* with Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence, and acting up onstage in a Los Angeles production of *Our Town*. "When I'm in the moment, it's almost like a high, a drug," Lathan says of her passion for her craft. "And that's why theater is home for me—it's a workout for your sitting." *Red nylon and Lycra sequin string bikini by Norma Kamali*

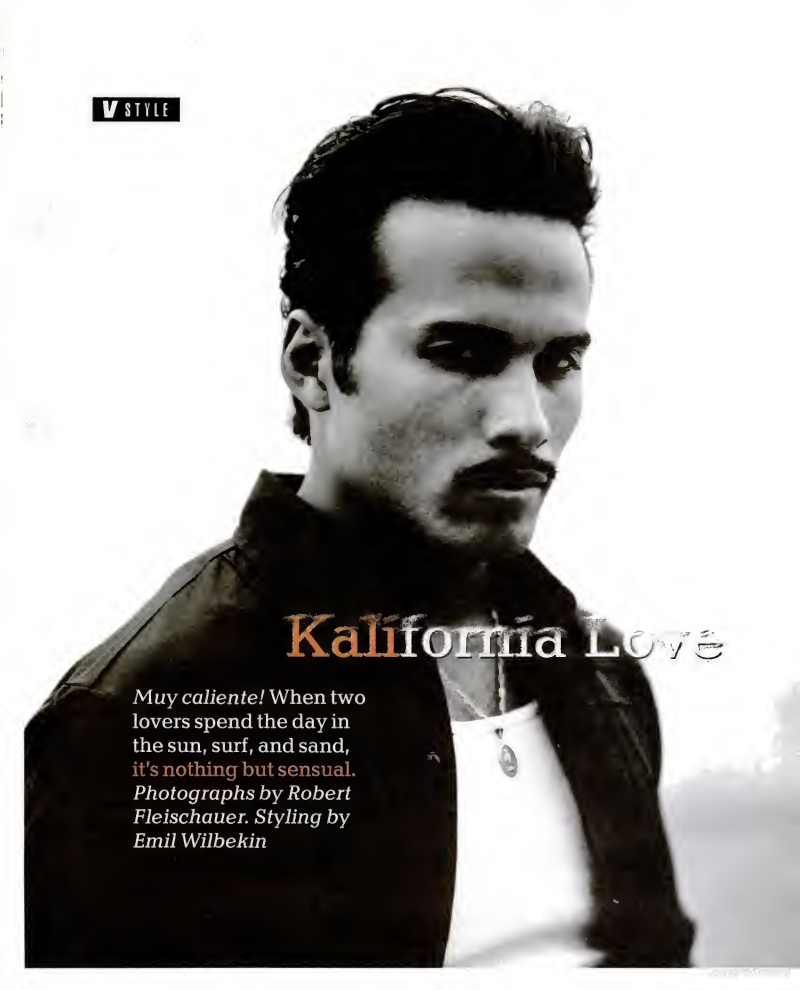
Contrary to what you might think, former MTV *VJ* **Idalis León** didn't just start acting recently; she's been doing it for 10 years. Even before her days as a singer with the C&C Music Factory-produced group *Seduction*, León worked on many Off-Broadway productions. "A friend took me to an acting class, and that was it," says the Brooklyn-born Puerto Rican. "I just knew it was what I was supposed to do."

This spring, León made her film debut in *Ride* (Dimension), with *New York Undercover*'s Malik Yoba, and is praying to land a part in one of two TV pilots—a drama for NBC and a sitcom for the WB Network. "I think it can hurt you when you're multi-talented because so many people are quick to doubt you. But I can be the best at this," says the defiant León. "I can be a Meryl Streep." *Bronze poly, lurex, and spandex cher beaded triangle bikini by Mossimo Swim*





Kenya Moore *Bills* USA 1990-1994) didn't want her body to interfere with her acting career. "For black actresses, there aren't a whole bunch of roles, especially if you're voluptuous," says the Detroit native, who's trending to play songstress Nature's Own on *College*. "What I hope to do, even with my physicality, is to not only play the seductress but also a ribbit parts and act in movies. I'd like to be the female *James Dean* and play a tough girl opposite Al Pacino in the forthcoming *Taking Out the Trash*. It's a very different part from her visceral role in the recent *Swallow*. "At first, I had a hard time with that part because I didn't want people to think I was the slut," says Moore. "But it's about entertainment, and hopefully the audience is mature and intelligent enough to understand that it's a character." *Yeah! Drive* polyester bodied into *Black* by Todd Oldham. SEE THE DETAILS



V STYLE

Kalifornia Love

Muy caliente! When two lovers spend the day in the sun, surf, and sand, it's nothing but sensual. Photographs by Robert Fleischauer. Styling by Emil Wilbekin

OPPOSITE:
PAPI CHULO

Black cotton short-sleeve woven shirt with white stitching by LEVEL 7; white cotton Slim Jim tank top by Quiksilver

THIS PAGE:
DULCE AMOR

Orange nylon mesh top with brown velvet detail by Verso; orange cotton and viscose zig zag print bikini by Missoni; olive cotton tank top by Papi Sports-wear; camouflage cotton corduroy cargo shorts by GUESS?



SESHOTA

Multicolored stretch viscose, fitted top with palm-leafes by Peter Lindbergh. Looking Good: Elizabeth Arden Maximizer Skin-care Daily Moisture Lotion; In SPF 15; Bain de Soleil Extended Protection Sunblock in SPF 15; eye shadow by Nat Robbins in Snowflakes; Two in One Eye Pencil in Midnight Blue and Silver Kohl by Estée Lauder; Professional Advanced Mascara in black by Jovani Girl; Revlon Moisture Stay Lip-Saver in Bliss; Clinol Urbane Gel Cleanser in Dark Auburn; Bumble and Bumble Grooming Cream



CANDELA

Navy nylon mesh T-shirt by ACT F8;
navy cotton cargo shorts by Fire and Ice;
black rayon crochet dress by GUESS?;
turquoise polyamide and elastin bikini
by Philosophy of Alberta Ferretti; shoes
by Esprit. SEE THE DETAILS



The Stylist

REDEFINING FASHION

LEVEL 7

What's cool in California is taking modern British sartorial ideas and mixing them with West Coast ease. Nobody creates this aesthetic better than James Sowins, the mastermind behind one of the hottest new labels in the sportswear market, LEVEL 7.

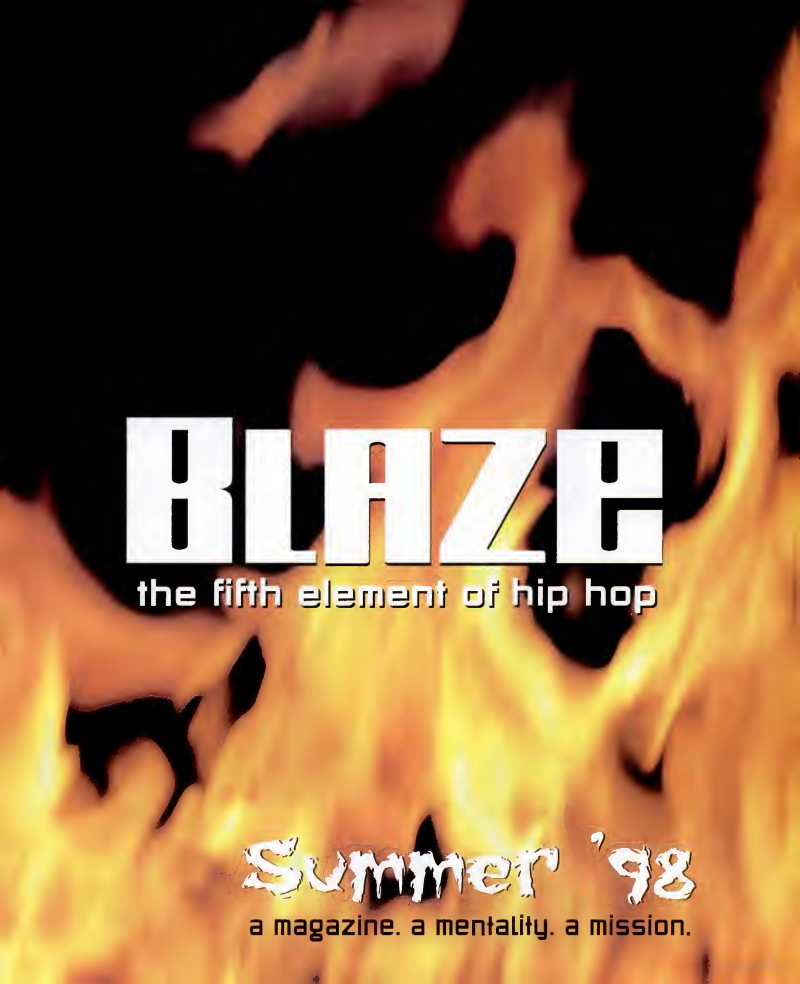
Sowins (former designer at Byblos, Axis, and Mossimo) creates clothing that is on point for the young man of the moment and for the times that we're living in. It's a fast-paced, urban world, virtually real—and with clothing options that are basic (wide-leg cotton cargo pants and fitted cotton sweaters) or

slightly daring (vintage-looking cotton embroidered shirts and nylon diagonal-striped shirts), LEVEL 7 fits the bill for the stylish guy who's not trying to be a fashion victim.

LEVEL 7's image is comfortable, modern, and discreet—the perfect gear for the undercover fashion Mack. Available at Fred Segal in Los Angeles and Louis Boston in Boston or by calling 714-440-7453, LEVEL 7 is perfect for the man who's makin' moves and taking it to the next level. SEE THE DETAILS.

Emil Wilbekin

**THE CLIMATE
OF HIP HOP
IS ABOUT TO
CHANGE
FOREVER
TRY NOT TO SWEAT...**



BLAZE

the fifth element of hip hop

Summer '98

a magazine. a mentality. a mission.



enyce

THE ENYCE CLOTHING COMPANY. 1.800.48 ENYCE

Sizzlin' Siren

Subject: Charli Baltimore, 24, rapper

Work: Hot new single "Money" featured on the *Woo* soundtrack and on her debut album, *Ice* (Unlabeled), due this summer.

Routine: "My skin's real dry," says the drop-dead gorgeous MC who uses Babor products (from Germany) on her face. "First, I rub [Babor's] Hy-Oil Cleanser into my skin. Then I follow up with its Phytoactive Base, a foaming cleanser, to wash it all off." Miss Charli also has love for Trish McEvoy makeup, NARS concealer, and Aveda hair products—specifically its Brilliant Emollient.

Secrets: "Instead of wrapping my hair before I go to bed, I sleep on it and wrap it before I go into the shower," says the Philly native with the punk-rock-colored tresses, a combination of poppy and vermillion red. "I find there's not as much oil buildup, and my hair gets more bouncy that way."

Must-Have: Aveda's Panthenol Protein Moisturizing Face Cream

Transformation: Makeup by Scott Patrick; hair by Lash for Cemel, Inc.

PH: GUY AROCH/REDUX; STYLING: FRED STOUT/STYLING; NAKED EYES: SHIMMERS BY ELLIEMIE; SMOKED EYES: BLACK NEONARS BY COVER FLY; LIP: L'ORÉAL PARIS; FOUNDATION: NARS; EYELINER: FETZ; HAIR: JOHN FRIEDA; LAMINATES BY SEBASTIAN; BRILLIANT EMOLIENT BY AVEDA; BLACK SILK CHIFFON DRESS WITH LACE BODICE AND HEM BY BLUMARINE



You've Got To Bag It Up.

Those who appreciate quality enjoy it responsibly.

© 1998 CROWN ROYAL • IMPORTED IN THE BOTTLE • BLENDED CANADIAN WHISKY • 40% ALC/VOL (80 PROOF) • JOSEPH E. SEAGRAM & SONS, NEW YORK, NY



We're never sure what's worse: paying for a bridesmaid dress...
or wearing it.

VIRGINIA SLIMS
It's a woman
thing.



© Philip Morris Inc. 1998

8 mg "tar," 0.7 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette
Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.



Johnny Depp, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*

CANNED HEAT

VIBE's sneak preview of the hottest (and coldest) movies of the season. By Gary Dauphin

Now that its ship has come in, Paramount Pictures will be summering fat, happy, and with a cheese-eating grin. But for the rest of Hollywood, May through August are still the nerve-racking make-or-break months. Stung by the failure of many of last year's would-be blockbusters—like *Batman & Robin* and *Speed 2*—and fearful that maybe bigger really is better, the studios have learned (again) that there are no rules in Movieland. Blame it on *Titanic*, which was moved from a summer to a fall release because execs were worried it wouldn't be able to compete with the traditional big guns of action adventure and alien invasion.

Since the \$200 million production turned out to be one of the most prof-

itable films in history, Hollywood can only shrug and get back to the old drawing board. Filling up the traditional blockbuster slots this summer are behemoth sci-fi flicks (*Godzilla* and *Armageddon*), workhorse cop franchisees (*Lethal Weapon 4*) and star-driven comedies (Eddie Murphy and friends in *Doctor Dolittle*). Scattered among the would-be box office kings are smaller, low-body count pictures—*Bulworth*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *54*—but they're hardly signs of a new movie order, just the studios' way of getting some more modest box office returns from adults tired of stunts and shoot-outs.

So sit back and relax as VIBE runs through this year's hopefuls, complete with industry buzz and daring psychic predictions.



MAY

BULWORTH

(Twentieth Century Fox)

Starring: Warren Beatty, Halle Berry

Directed by: Warren Beatty

Fast Pitch: Primary Colors meets Black Like Me

Scenario: An off-kilter, high-profile satire about a big-mouth senator (Beatty) who tries to take out a hit on himself. With nothing to lose, he becomes Mr. Hard Truth, offending every special-interest group in the country. Halle Berry plays Beatty's female rapper/love interest (!) and ghetto tour guide. **Evil Eye:** An early screening suggests that, despite this movie's good, liberal intentions and hip-hop-friendly workweek, it's embarrassingly out of touch and condescending toward its less-than-one-dimensional African-American character. The overwrought narrative feels like an excuse for Beatty to work through some personal fantasy about getting the black pussy. **Psychic Forecast:** *Bulworth's* lame cultural posturing may win friends among bleeding-heart critics and die-hard Vanilla Ice fans (Beatty actually raps through much of the movie), but most heads would be hitting the picket lines if it didn't seem so pointless.



Godzilla (TriStar)

Starring: Matthew Broderick, Hank Azaria, Maria Pitillo, Jean Reno Directed by: Roland Emmerich

Fast Pitch: If you build HIM, they will come **Scenario:** Though the studio is not revealing much more imagery than the monster's big-ass foot prior to release, the first installment in this projected three-picture arc from *Id4* director Emmerich and screenwriter Dean Devlin stars Broderick as a doomsaying scientist. The film begins with a French nuclear test gone awry and ends in Madison Square Garden, where hundreds of hungry reptile babies

finally put Knicks fans out of their misery. **Evil Eye:** The anticipated PG-13 rating may not allow for graphic crunching and munching, but the kitsch factor could have audiences rolling in the aisles. **Psychic Forecast:** Forget trying to kill this digital king lizard, *Godzilla* (I through III) will be stomping well into the next century.



Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (Universal)

Starring: Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro Directed by: Terry Gilliam

Fast Pitch: *Easy Rider* (West) **Scenario:** Visual stylist Gilliam (*12 Monkeys*, *Brazil*) brings Hunter S. Thompson's trippy sublimated road novel to the big screen with the help of pretty boys Depp as Thompson and Del Toro, who's said to have gained nearly 50 pounds for his role as Thompson's lawyer, Dr. Gonzo. **Evil Eye:** An edgy motion picture if ever there was one, *Fear and Loathing* runs the risk of being swamped by brain-dead, big-budget

get summer releases. **Psychic Forecast:** Depp and Del Toro should bring in both teenybopper and hipster alike, and Gilliam's string of decent returns on well-respected, innovative films should continue.

THE X-FILES

(Twentieth Century Fox)

Starring: David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Martin Landau, Mitch Pileggi Directed by: Rob Bowman

Pitch: The truth is in your local multiplexes **Scenario:** One of Fox's most successful TV shows makes the jump to the big screen, with cast, crew, and studio hoping to do the *Star Trek* thing (i.e., move the property to movieoland once the TV run ends). Plot details are typically being kept supersecret, but the smart money seems divided evenly between two threads: An Oklahoma City-style bombing connected to government conspiracy and a tale about "the Elders," an alien-linked multinational secret society working with the show's shadowy consortium. **Evil Eye:** Any *Trek* fan will tell you that the good movies mostly come out in even numbers, suggesting it might be best to wait for *The X-Files II*. Trailer is also a disappointment, promising at best a two-hour blowup of the series (not surprising, seeing as how director Bowman's main credits are episodes of the TV show). **Psychic Forecast:** The only thing keeping us from picking this as the summer's biggest film is fear of the geek factor.



Snake Eyes (Paramount)

Starring: Nicolas Cage, Gary Sinise Directed by: Brian DePalma

Fast Pitch: *Sunday*, *Bloody Sunday* meets *The Parallax View*

Scenario: DePalma goes back to the *Mission: Impossible* money trough with another high-tech conspiracy theory, this time setting Cage loose as an Atlanta City police detective chasing assassins through a packed arena on heavyweight title fight night. **Evil Eye:** After playing nice with *Mission*, the director might feel like indulging in some of his trademark visual kinkiness—a cool habit that's sometimes lost on mainstream audiences. **Psychic Forecast:** Cage is a huge draw, and DePalma has settled into an industry-pleasing groove. *Snake Eyes* should make a *Face/Off*-like splash into the summer pool.



Doctor Dolittle (Twentieth Century Fox)

Starring: Eddie Murphy and the voices of Norm MacDonald, Ving Rhames, Chris Rock, and John Leguizamo Directed by: Betty Thomas

Fast Pitch: "If we could talk to the account-tants..." **Scenario:** Murphy re-creates the character from the 1967 musical about a man who could communicate with our furry friends. Also on board are the folks at Jim Henson's Creature Shop, the same FX house that provided the critters in *Babe*.

Evil Eye: The original *Dolittle* was a big-budget box office disaster that almost bankrupted Twentieth Century Fox (and that's in 1967 dollars). **Psychic Forecast:** Having weathered a flop called *Mena*, as well as rumors about his sexual pedadollies, Murphy returns to the remake (à la *The Nutty Professor*), which should have him happily cracking wise from now till fall.



Out of Sight (Universal)

Starring: George Clooney, Jennifer Lopez, Ving Rhames, Don Cheadle Directed by: Steven Soderbergh

Fast Pitch: *The Defiant Ones* in love **Scenario:** sex, lies and videotape director Soderbergh turns out a gritty-jokey *Get Shirty*-type tale about a prison break and kidnapping that end in smooches. Lopez's kidnapped cop and an excellent supporting cast should give convict

Clooney plenty of color to work with. **Evil Eye:** Clooney's yet to score a real box office winner, and Soderbergh's indie curiosity still looking to break big. If this project drops out of sight, Clooney's post-*ER* career might be headed for C.U.I. **Psychic Forecast:** Should fare well during the late-summer doldrums, but expect more Clooney buzz than box office.



JULY

BLADE

(New Line) Starring: Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff, Kris Kristofferson, N'Bushe Wright **Directed by:** Stephen Norrington**Fast Pitch:** "Omigod! Buffy the Vampire Slayer's totally black!" **Scenario:** Vampire mostly to goth-comix freaks, Blade is a half human/half vampire cat who fought denizens of the night along with the dimly remembered Nightstalkers and the better-known Ghost Rider. Greg Cannom, who won Oscars for *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*, is on board to do makeup. **Evil Eye:** Blade's character is a dim, semicomic echo of Japanese manga vampire hunters, and, even among American comic junkies, he's no Spawn. **Psychic Forecast:** Proven formula and high cool factor should win out, and sub-Gen Xers will need extra room to park their skateboards. Box office winner or no, Snipes finally gets the chance to pursue his lifelong dream of playing a superhero.where no oil driller has gone before with the lifeless *The Abyss*. **Psychic Forecast:** Expect big box office returns and real-life hearings on antistardom defenses from publicity-hungry legislators still upset that they couldn't reopen the investigation of the Titanic disaster.**Armageddon (Touchstone)****Starring:** Bruce Willis, Billy Bob Thornton, Liv Tyler, Ben Affleck, Steve Buscemi **Directed by:** Michael Bay**Fast Pitch:** *The Rock* is falling! *The Rock* is falling! **Scenario:** After directing *The Rock*, Bay trades in Nicolas Cage for Willis, an oil driller drafted by NASA to stop a planet-killer asteroid in the summer's most effects-intensive movie. **Evil Eye:** Bay's untested hero angle was tested (unsuccessfully) in *The Rock*, while producer Gale Anne Hurd went to get with Latina fly girl Hayek. **Evil Eye:** Can a semiserious Myers lure audiences into an edgy retro sub-cult picture? More importantly, can he dance? **Psychic Forecast:** Hustling into theaters on the strength of box office-friendly stars and the ongoing fascination with the polyester years, 54's prospects look pretty groovy. Myers should also win some newfound respect.**54 (Miramax)****Starring:** Mike Myers, New Campbell, Salma Hayek, Ryan Phillippe **Directed by:** Mark Christopher**Fast Pitch:** "Do a little coke / Make a little love / Get down tonight..." **Scenario:** A black-comic look back at a bartender schlepping among the beautiful people at the '70s disco palace Studio 54. Myers is the owner, and Phillippe plays the drink rock trying to get with Latina fly girl Hayek. **Evil Eye:** Can a semiserious Myers lure audiences into an edgy retro sub-cult picture? More importantly, can he dance? **Psychic Forecast:** Hustling into theaters on the strength of box office-friendly stars and the ongoing fascination with the polyester years, 54's prospects look pretty groovy. Myers should also win some newfound respect.**Lethal Weapon 4 (Warner Bros.)****Starring:** Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Chris Rock, Rene Russo, Joe Pesci **Directed by:** Richard Donner**Fast Pitch:** The Boys are back in town (again) **Scenario:** The long-running odd couple-with-guns franchise takes another action-comedy swipe at audiences, this time with Rock doing the main comic-relief thing. Both Glover and Gibson made noises about wanting to let the old girl rest already, but apparently money (at least \$5 million each) really does talk. **Evil Eye:** If one's served you meat this old in a restaurant, you'd sue. **Psychic Forecast:** Few ventures are as sure as another *Lethal Weapon* pic, and Rock's frenetic brilliance should inject some energy into a creaky franchise.

NEGOTIATOR

(Warner Bros.)**Starring:** Samuel L. Jackson, Kevin Spacey **Directed by:** F. Gary Gray**Scenario:** Jackson (whose stock only rises) got the nod as the good cop who's framed for corruption in this hostage-taking thriller. Oscar-winner Spacey is on board as the only man who believes in Jackson's innocence. **Evil Eye:** Few negatives here, but this is an important test for Gray (director of niche hits *Friday* and *Set It Off*, who didn't get much love from his star, Jackson was overheard recently by our spies in Hollywood complaining that the director should go back to music video directing. **Psychic Forecast:** The only question here is how big a win *Negotiator* scores—and how much credit Gray gets for it.**BASEketball (Universal)****Starring:** Trey Parker, Matt Stone **Directed by:** David Zucker**Fast Pitch:** *The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh* redux **Scenario:** The folks behind *Airplane!* and *Naked Gun* take on the hoop game in this schmockfest about a small market team and the salt-and-pepper duo (South Park creators Parker and Stone) who make them champions. Bottom-feeder hilarity ensues. **Evil Eye:** Audiences need to be either under 12 or stoned to appreciate this film. **Psychic Forecast:** Mostly harmless. Low-overhead fancies like *BASEketball* are as easy for Hollywood to churn out as they are for audiences to forget.**The Avengers (Warner Bros.)****Starring:** Uma Thurman, Ralph Fiennes, Sean Connery **Directed by:** Jeremiah Chechik **Fast Pitch:** *Austin Powers* meets *Mission: Impossible* **Scenario:** Sixties cult TV hit makes a comeback with Fiennes and Thurman playing an updated John Steed and Emma Peel. Sean Connery stars as the aristocrat supervillain aiming to rule the world using that old fave of the spy game: weather control. **Evil Eye:** The line between irony and farce could be thin here. **Psychic Prediction:** *The Avengers* has good-looking talent to spare; so if Thurman doesn't overact and Fiennes doesn't feel too silly, this could be a sneak-attack hit. Otherwise, think: Brit kitsch à la *Spiceworld*.

AUGUST



movie reviews by gary dauphin

hav plenty

MIRAMAX

If *Love Jones* was an attempt to counter negative images of black love with pretty-picture romance, *Hav Plenty* is the flip side: a raw and savagely funny indie that



COURTESY OF MIRAMAX FILMS

upends typical notions of "positivity" and "realness." The "Plenty" of the title is Lee Plenty (writer-director Christopher Scott Cherot), an aspiring novelist/black-er; the "Hav" is Haviland Savage (Chenae Maxwell), the bourgeois media exec Lee's loved, semi-secretly, since college. Taking a trip down to Haviland's D.C. digs for New Year's, Lee spends several days smirking at the black corporate set. He's damaged, downwardly mobile goods but still temporarily captures the

fancy of women with perfectly tweezed eyebrows and high-siddd R&B tastes. The film is a total boho-boy fairy tale with an unexpected edge: Lee dishes out thinly veiled contempt when it comes to Hav's follies (she's dating an oily lover-man singer with a Top 10 hit), but he's still unable to resist as she slowly wraps him around a well-manicured pinkie. Hav and her girls are completely unlike the Strong Sisters and dick-hungry freaks you'll find in most films by and about black people, even if they are seen from Plenty's wholly male point of view. Picked up by Miramax, this low-budget gem has taken on a new audience-friendly ending, but credit director Cherot for finding a creative way to meet the demands of both art and industry: Lee Plenty discovers that getting what you want doesn't always equal getting what you need.



he got game

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Spike Lee's new ode to basketball is deceptively straightforward: Milwaukee Bucks guard Ray Allen plays the top high school player in the country and Denzel Washington his father, a convicted murderer furloughed from prison in order to convince his son to choose the governor's alma mater for college. What's important here isn't the thin, improbable story line but what branches off it: a careful sketch of a painfully complicated father-son relationship; an insider's view of the pitfalls of top



teenage prospects; and the most artfully condensed b-ball visuals in cinema. The film doesn't sink all its shots—Allen's got game but limited acting chops, and Denzel's weekend-pass romance with a prostitute (Milla Jovovich) feels forced. But there's enough here to remind us that Spike Lee's not just a pitchman or a polemicist. He's also one of the most creative directors working in Hollywood today.

hope floats

GREYCAT FILMS

They don't make tearjerkers like *Hope Floats* anymore, but trust director Forest Whitaker to get the old formula right. Sandra Bullock plays this year's all-



American sweetheart, a small-town prom queen humiliated by her cheating husband on a TV talk show. Retreating to Texas with her cute-as-a-button daughter in tow, Bullock bunks with her eccentric, wit-dispensing mother and learns to love again thanks to tumbleweed hunk Harry Connick Jr. Between *Hope* and *Waiting to Exhale*, no one will ever accuse director Forest Whitaker of being an auteur, but he milks his genre's past emotional repertoire with such skill, you've gotta give it up to him. Don't be surprised if you find yourself reaching for your hankie, even if the images on screen are pure heartland corn.

reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews • reviews

dr. snakeskin's home video views

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Devil's Advocate

With the recent passing on October 29, 1997 of Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan, it's time that we here at VIBE proudly display the P-Funk "Sign of the Horns" and give up some "Sympathy for the Devil."

Since leading his band of winged guerrillas in a failed coup d'état of heaven, the Devil has come a long way, from simple Hebraic trickster to the personification of pure cosmic evil for the Christian Church. More recently, Beelzebub has become a sure bet in luring mortals to movie theaters. Some of his career highlights have included *Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1922), a silent Swedish production wherein naked bimbos plant a big wet one on the Dastardly Demon's ass; *Lucifer Rising* (1970), Kenneth Anger's evocative marriage of film and ritual magic; and cult faves like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973), and *The Omen* (1976).

With the pitchfork poppa having donned so many cinematic guises throughout the years, you may wonder, "Who is the Devil really?" As the N.O.I.'s Honorable Elijah Muhammad has repeatedly informed us, the Devil is the Whyte Man. And what better Whyte Man to play his infernal majesty than Al Pacino?

Pacino stars as John Milton in 1997's *The Devil's Advocate*, a John Grisham-esque legal thriller that evolves into a Stephen King horror show. Given the film's devil-

ish casting—the blank Keanu Reeves with the hammy but gifted Pacino—*Advocate* is clearly meant to be a lampoon of both these popular suspense genres.

When successful small-town lawyer Kevin Lomax's (Reeves) ambition overrides his conscience, he finds himself accepting a lucrative offer from a big Manhattan law firm founded by Satan hi'self. Not only is Satan a major player in the world of corporate law and finance, he's

a slick pimp daddy with a bevy of freaks who have the power to turn out anybody, including Lomax's Bible-thumping mammy. Eat your heart out, Marilyn Manson!

Despite moments of narrative hokiness and overwrought special effects, *Advocate* is a dark fun-house ride, and Al Pacino, as Lucifer, is downright hilarious. Some might feel shortchanged by the film's cheap ending; but in a time when our country is plagued by the psychosis of the Christian Right, a night spent with *The Devil's Advocate* could put things back in perspective. And remember friends, hail Satan!



**THE ONLY AWARD SHOW WHERE ACTORS BRING THEIR
PORN STAR GIRLFRIENDS AND SAME SEX LOVERS
INSTEAD OF THEIR MOTHERS AND PRETEND BOYFRIENDS.**



98 MOVIE AWARDS

JUNE 4TH, 9^{PM} ET

HOSTED BY SAMUEL L. JACKSON



tv

The Defense Never Rests

Steve Harris keeps law and order on ABC's gritty crime drama. By Eric Deggs

When Steve Harris's imposing physique fills out a double-breasted Armani on ABC's sleeper-hit drama *The Practice*, it's easy to imagine him playing the roles that sparked his career: Athlete. Convict. Street thug. "At six feet tall, two hundred and twenty-five [pounds], and bald—the industry thought they had me locked

enrolled in a graduate seminar at the University of Delaware and spent three years studying the work of playwrights Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw. "I didn't want to be limited," he says. "I didn't really know the classics, and I wanted to speak in that realm."

These days, Harris speaks to a new audience as Eugene Young, a Boston lawyer who defends the innocent and the guilty with equal fervor. Crafted by David E. Kelley (the man behind *Chicago Hope* and *Ally McBeal*), the program is critically acclaimed for its gritty tone and ensemble cast of relative unknowns, including Lisa Gay Hamilton and Dylan McDermott. Harris was chosen for his "charisma," according to the show's creator. "Power and fun just oozed out of him."

"[Kelley] took a chance when he put the cast together," Harris says. "So far it's paying off." The show surprised industry executives last fall by surviving Saturday night's TV graveyard with an average 6.4 Nielsen rating (each ratings point represents 980,000 homes). When ABC execs moved the drama to the prime-time slot seasonally occupied by *Monday Night Football*, ratings rose to an average 8.5. At press time, ABC execs didn't know where they would move *The Practice* when football returns in the fall. "We're not convinced that ABC will cancel *Monday Night Football* and leave us there," Kelley joked at a recent press conference. "They tell us they will."

Harris's character has gone from being an aggressive, cocky attorney to a power-hitting, charismatic litigator who's more of a team player. "He understands the difference between law and justice," says Harris, whose defense work began as a linebaker at Northern Illinois University. "Though, I think sometimes he would rather have justice than law." Case closed.

The Practice airs Mondays on ABC at 10 p.m. EST.

up," says the native of Chicago's West Side. "They had an image set for me."

But Harris, who gained recognition as Sugar Hill's Ricky Goggles (1994) and Private McCoy in 1996's *The Rock*, refused to be typecast. He

Steve Harris from *The Practice*

iVaya Mi Gente!

Variety show gives props to Latino peeps. By Cristina Verán



DeLeon would be proud of Fredy Correa and Angel DeLeon, two musicians on a mission to bring Latino stars to American TV. Correa used to sing with the Barrio Boyz; DeLeon runs with C&C Music Factory. Now they cohost and coproduce *Mi Gente! My People*, the first nationally syndicated Latino variety show on network television. "I grew up on mashed potatoes and meat loaf just as much as on rice and beans," proclaims Correa, a Nuyorican whose experience mirrors that of many second-generation Latinos in the U.S.

Mi Gente!, which will air six times this year, is a dash of *chile* in a meat-and-potatoes market. It debuted in March 1997 as the first English-language program to celebrate Latinos who excel in film, television, art, music, and politics. "I don't see a lot of us on David Letterman or Jay Leno," notes actor Michael DeLorenzo, the former *New York Undercover* star and one-time *Mi Gente!* guest. "Angel and Fredy are out there exposing a lot of performers who normally might not get to appear on mainstream television."

Mi Gente!'s guest list has also included Jennifer Lopez, Oscar de la Hoya, and John Leguizamo. But it was no small feat for DeLeon and Correa to get media execs to green-light their bicultural brainchild (which at \$70,000 per episode is a TV bargain). They approached three companies before gaining the support of Automatic Productions (producers of Mariah Carey's "Honey" video and A&E's *Library Quest*) and eventually winning over powerful network affiliates in 92 percent of America's TV markets. "The initial reaction to our concept was, 'Well why don't you just do it for Univision [a Spanish-language network]?' " DeLeon recalls. "But we always saw it as an English-speaking program."

Mi Gente! is broadcast on different days and times in each city—which makes it hard to track ratings and build a regular audience. But people are taking notice. "We get e-mail from the strangest places," DeLeon says. "Jamaica, Colombia, Kansas City." Kansas City? Guess they need some salsa to go with that steak.

The next *Mi Gente!* will air throughout June. (Check local listings or the Web site www.migentemypeople.com for details.)

Peep This VIBE helps you bask in the blue glow

May 5: *Butter* (HBO, midnight EST). The Death Row debacle pales in comparison to this multifaceted tale of money, murder, and mayhem in the music industry. Cast includes daytime soap stud Shemar Moore, as well as Nia Long, Tony Todd, Donnie (not Mark) Wahlberg, and Emie Hudson as 8 Ball—the corrupt manager who warns: "One day your face is on a billboard, the next it's on a milk carton...." May 14: Yes,

this is D-day, as in the day NBC airs its final *Seinfeld* episode (NBC, 9 p.m. EST). But if you don't go for N.Y.C.'s most neurotic quartet, check out *Premio Lo Nuestro* (Univision, 8 p.m. EST). Univision rolls out the red carpet for Latin music's hottest stars during the 10th-anniversary broadcast of this awards show—the Spanish equivalent of the Grammys. Tune in to see who wins more premiums, Enrique Iglesias or his *papí*, Julio. *Y el ganador es* ("And the winner is").... June 7: MTV Ultra

Sound: *Growing Up Brandy* (MTV, 10 p.m. EST/PST) This episode takes viewers to work with the Moesha star while she records her new album.... June 8: *The Magic Hour* Fox, check local listings). With Sheila E. frontin' his house band, Magic Johnson can do no wrong. Or can he? Find out tonight when his gabfest debuts.

Rochell Thomas

special charter subscription offer
one time opportunity
to be a part of hip hop history
from the publishers of *vibe* comes
a magazine destined to set the hip hop world on fire!

BLAZE

subscribe to *blaze* and be the **first** to receive the **premiere issue!**

subscribe to *blaze* now and the first issue you receive will be the premiere issue.
there will be a limited supply available on newsstands.
guarantee that you will receive this collector's item by sending in the attached card.

plus we will send you this first issue absolutely free!
if you like your first issue, you will pay just \$11.95 for a full year, ten issues in all, over 60% off
the newsstand price. if not, just return your bill marked "cancel" and keep the free issue, on us!
all you need to do is send in the attached card, and we'll take care of the rest.

you can also write to us at: **blaze**
po box 51513
boulder, CO 80322-1513

word

Original Flava

Hip hop veterans toss old school recipes onto your plate



Back in the day, some MCs happily kicked it with cherry Kool-Aid and government cheese.

Come dinnertime, low-on-the-dough microphone fiends whipped out budget gourmet skills. But what, pray tell, would Flavor Flav or Grandmaster Flash know about throwin' down in the kitchen? A little bit-a-sumthin', according to Al Pereira's ghetto-fabulous cookbook, *Rappers' Delights: African-American Cookin' With Soul* (Universe).

Rappers' Delights' culinary picks include the iconoclastic likes of KRS-One, Queen Latifah, Monie Love, and Marley Marl. With the exception of pop crooners Innuence, there are no R&B swingers in this book. It's mostly beat-box, back-in-the-day flava—a hearty compilation of franks 'n' beans homestyle recipes that have no roots in the kitchens of nou-veau pop stars such as Puff Daddy or Foxy Brown. "I wanted to represent the people I really liked," Pereira says. A New York Jets team pho-

tographer turned author, Big Al got MCs to share their Shake 'n Bake knowledge while they mugged for his camera during freelance magazine photo shoots.

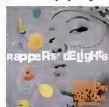
Quite a few of Pereira's verbal chefs can go for broke with a pot and a package of spaghetti (i.e., Spinderella's saucy Spaghettirella), but there are some, such as Q-Tip, who find culinary solace in a box of cornflakes. Others, such as the Real Roxanne, were virtual recipe supermarketers. Roxanne "just kept goin' and goin'," giving recipe after recipe, says Pereira. Meanwhile, Spinderella simply refused to dish out the facts. "I could give you the recipe, but I'd rather cook for you," the turntable mistress told Pereira. (She later cooked her favorite dish for him.)

A self-proclaimed lasagna king, Pereira sampled most of the cuisine bestowed upon him by his rap star homies. He gives ecstatic props to Doug E. Fresh's Barbecued Potatoes. But he doesn't front when he admits he kept his distance from Just-Ice's Hot Curried Goat. "I gotta be honest, I'm kinda scared of that one," he says. Even Just-Ice himself warns that, after preparing his four-legged delicacy, the first

thing you should do is "wash your hands and don't touch no other part of your body."

No matter who is—or isn't—cooking, *Rappers' Delights* brings an expedient and alternative zest to hip hop while paying homage to more than one variety of ol' school flava. "I just want people to have fun," Pereira says. "Some of the recipes are delicious; some of 'em are crazy-like Flava's." Public Enemy No. 1's recipe for rice pila? "One bag of rice plus your favorite stuff." Here's to a new taste of hip hop.

Deborah L. Rouse



Doug E. Fresh's Barbecued Potatoes

Ingredients:

- 3-4 Idaho potatoes, diced
- 2 tablespoons lemon pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable salt
- 1/2 pound cheddar cheese
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1/2 cup margarine, melted
- 1/2 cup pepper, cored, seeded, and chopped
- 1 green pepper, cored, seeded, and chopped

Instructions:

Mix potatoes in vegetable salt and lemon pepper. Let sit. Finely chop the cheddar cheese and mix with garlic, onion, margarine, and barbecue sauce. Toss both mixtures into a skillet, cover, and cook, letting it simmer over medium heat for 45-55 minutes.

Stir occasionally.

Adapted from *Rappers' Delights* with permission of Universe Publishing.



Central Avenue Sounds

When historians write about the jazz that came out of sunny California in the '30s and '40s, the reports are often one-sided. You can find volumes about the mellow white artists who frequented the legendary Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach. But until recently, little has been published about the jazz scene in the 'hood.

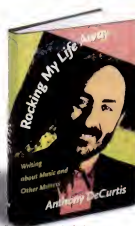
Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles (University of California Press) reveals a flourishing South-Central scene that was as much a

haven for nearby Hollywood celebrities as it was for local residents. An enlightening collection of interviews conducted by UCLA oral historian Steven Steingard, the book has personal anecdotes from L.A.'s internationally renowned artists (i.e., Big Jay McNeely) and the musicians who integrated the Hollywood studios (i.e., drummer Lee Young, multi-instrumentalist Buddy Collette). It places you inside smoky clubs—the Downbeat, the Club Alabama—giving L.A.'s forgotten jazz scene its well-deserved due. K. Leander Williams

Rocking My Life Away

Anthony DeCurtis's new collection of essays, *Rocking My Life Away: Writing About Music and Other Matters* (Duke University Press), passionately blends music, journalism, remembrance, and argument with a fresh perspective. DeCurtis salutes the usual suspects—Dylan, Lennon, the Stones, Garcia—but there's more here than nods to rock's royalty. Moving from a study of proto-Seattle artists, Georgia to an interview with RZA on Wu-Tang's cosmology, DeCurtis shows off serious, if pop, sociological skills. One essay, "I'll Take My Stand," is a smart rebuke to those bemoaning the "dumbing down" (think: darkening) of popular culture, people who think art lives only in museums (Hilton Kramer, you've been played), and anyone seeking the comfortably familiar modes of European culture. Like bell hooks and Mikal Gilmore, DeCurtis understands the links between culture and music. His book brilliantly chronicles the chaotic times in which they coexist.

Michael E. Ross



Purple Reign

Funky. Exhibitionist. Genius. There isn't enough space here to describe the multitalented mega-performer who wore silk ruffles with heels, changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol, and scrawled "slave" on his cheek to describe his relationship with his record company. But British journalist Liz Jones crams it all in *Purple Reign* (Carol Publishing), a juicy biography of the Artist Formerly Known as Prince. Jones interviews the Artist's former managers, collaborators, and lovers—dirt-dishing folks who depict him as a stankified, temperamental star who does what he wants when he wants.

Despite sales slumps throughout his career, the Artist has produced 25 albums (14 went platinum), dabbled in the film industry, and married his "Latin Barbie Doll," Mayte. Jones and friends tattle their way through each incident, creating a project worthy of the Artist himself.

Annamary Pelleyo

The **MOVIE**
was *awful*. The RESTAURANT was packed.
But you took your
SUNFIRE.
What a *GREAT* night.



Newspaper said two thumbs up. Whose thumbs were they using? Our luck at the restaurant wasn't any better. Good thing we took my Pontiac Sunfire. The **air conditioning** kept us cool. The **standard anti-lock brakes** kept us in control. We got through the traffic lookin' for another restaurant real easy because of my quick five-speed...also standard. And my

Sunfire comes with **Next Generation Air Bags*** just in case we ran into somebody we didn't feel like running into. But as we drove around listening to music on my **built-in CD* player...** I paid a little more for that...we got to thinkin' maybe we're best off right where we are. In my Sunfire. Besides, there's always tomorrow night.

Finally, a real set of wheels you can really afford.

Call 1-800-2PONTIAC or check out our site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.pontiac.com>.
©1998 GM Corp. All rights reserved. *Always use safety belts and proper child restraints, even with Next Generation Air Bags.
See the Owner's Manual for more safety information. *CD player is an option.





N'Dea Davenport

THE UNFORGETTABLE ORIGINAL VOICE OF THE BRAND NEW HEAVIES. N'DEA DAVENPORT BRINGS IT ON WITH HER SELF-TITLED DEBUT

THE ALBUM. OUT 6.30.98



REVOLUTIONS



LENNY KRAVITZ '5'

VIRGIN

BY GABRIEL ALVAREZ

If there was an equivalent of the hip-hop-entrenched/Puff Daddy-affiliated jokester known as the Mad Rapper in rock 'n' roll, he'd be hounding Lenny Kravitz.

He'd hate Lenny's string of hits; he'd dislike "Let Love Rule" (1989) phony Beatlemania, "It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over" (1994) lip-synched Style Council, and "Are You Gonna Go My Way" (1993) a Jimi Hendrix jack move. He'd flip on the "dreadlocked dynamo's pretty-boy looks and flamboyant fashion sense. And he'd pop a blood vessel contemplating the composer's co-writers—luscious ladies like the lovely Lisa Bonet (Lisa Bonet!) and feisty French chanteuse Vanessa Paradis. A biter, a cream puff, a lucky son-of-a-bitch, Lenny Kravitz ain't shit, the pissed-off Mad Air Guitarist would spit.

But nine years in the game, Kravitz can lay claim to longevity. He effectively silenced pen-pushing naysayers by producing three rich, refined, and respectable albums: 1989's gold *Let Love Rule*, 1991's platinum *Mama Said*, and 1993's platinum *Are You Gonna Go My Way*. Rather than gloat, Lenny kept cool. A God-fearing neophyte, the mighty nice melodist espoused love in his exquisitely recorded schmaltzy music and wielded a better positive mental attitude than Tony Robbins. Lenny Kravitz is a multitasking multi-instrumentalist capable of cranking out formulaic yet tasteful ballads, retro 1960s rump shakers, and stirring anthems of grandeur. And he substituted gusto for originality. Lenny's warm, sincere

vocals outshine any throat-box deficiencies.

In 1995, however, something was bugging our friend. On *Circus*, Kravitz pulled a *Loveless*, posing nude in the CD booklet and wallowing in the excess of narcissism that rock stars are known for. Tripe like "Rock and Roll Is Dead," in which the usually chipper Lenny lashed out, "You can't even sing or play an instrument / So you just scream instead," was the moment that haters had been impatiently waiting for: Lenny was slipping. Brainless, aimless, and shameless, the up-close-and-personal Kravitz lost his personality; he was too busy being more famous than Amos—you know, the cookie guy. Leather trousers seemed more important to Kravitz than good tunes.

Adding an extra 12 months to his regular two-years-between-albums cycle to recuperate from the ghastly freak show that was *Circus*, Kravitz is back with album numero cinco. While on the last album a country twang rang loudest, 5, for the most part, is on a funk trip. Hinting at oncoming P-funk by including the sounds of the mothership landing, "Super Soul Fighter" cheats us by skipping out on the Parliament promise. Instead, we are treated to Atlantic City lounge-act junk. It's more *Man With Two Brains* than Funkadel-

Brainless, aimless, and shameless, the up-close-and-personal Kravitz lost his personality; he was too busy being more famous than Amos—you know, the cookie guy.

ic's 1971 *Maggot Brain*, more comedy than cosmic slop. Likewise, the meandering "Straight Cold Player," whose only lyrics are the song's title, sounds so mundane that it reminds you of the type of track to which Playmates break a sweat in some softcore Playboy Channel fodder—you know, background music that doesn't get in the way of the action.

Frail funk cuts aside, it's only fitting that Lenny's 1998 blues redeem him. Basking in a current of brooding organ bumps, the moody "If You Can't Say No" is superbly structured, zigzagging between a sparse drum machine and impassioned guitar licks. "You went with another man / And I cried when I read your letter," he moans. "But I don't really want to know where you gone / Or if it was better." Here, Kravitz puts his all in his wailing. Backed by a killer bass line, "I Belong to You" is Lenny Kravitz under the spell of modern R&B. Faster than you can say PuffyMissyAaliyah, the song sucks you in. And it packs nifty, kinky-dink piano taps to boot.

Most of the tracks on 5 lack the heartfelt emotion emitted on "Thinking of You." A moving tribute to his departed mother, Roxie Roker (the affable Helen Willis on the classic *The Jeffersons*), the song soars high above the clouds with sentiment. "Tell me, Mama / Is it just the way they say / And tell me, Mama / Are you missing me the way / That I'm missing you today?" ponders Kravitz, before tenderly asking, "How is freedom?" By far, "Thinking of You" is the best written composition of the collection.

But Kravitz's Led Zeppelin crashes and burns again on "Black Velveten." An '80s Flock of Seagulls knockoff exploring the sex life of a computerized chick, it reeks of Black Velvet (read: ultracheesy) and is destined to wind up as the theme for a European mouthwash commercial, as evidenced by the hook "Black Velveten / Simple and clean / Oh what a bad machine...." Jaime "Bionic Woman" Smith, keep your head up.

Not that Kravitz has ever been a true lyric master. This is, after all, the same dude who once sang, "Little fishes in the sea / Say hooray." Thus, it's good for him that he still, on occasion, has the ability to kick ass musically. That's the only way to explain "You're My Flavor." Despite played-out, your-love-is-like-a-drug metaphors and corny one-liners (this guy actually says "All thirty-two, baby" at the song's climax), the jam is pure undistilled fun. Say what you will about Sir Kravitz, the man still has an uncanny knack for kicking out honest-to-goodness head nodders. But, like the Beastie Boys advised, he also needs to check his head. Teetering between rock god and god-awful, Lenny and his funk flunks should have taken the Fifth. At least he didn't rap.

TRICKY 'ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES'

ISLAND RECORDS



Since the release of his third album, *Pre-Millennium Tension*, in 1996, Tricky's seen electronica gain a respectable berth alongside trip hop, the genre he largely invented. Now he's distancing himself from his music bedfellows by evolving even further. Tricky's latest, *Angels With Dirty Faces*, is a flat-out blues album that, with a sound as modern as the most advanced hip hop, succeeds in consolidating his position as a music maverick. Opening the album with "Mellow," Tricky runs through his cauldron of voodoo voices while a stuttering blues guitar defines the groove. Tricky's slithery rapping has grown increasingly menacing yet less paranoid, but it has also become more slurred. That leaves the mother of his child/vocal foil, Martina, as Tricky's most intelligible voice. In the context of Tricky's music, Martina's a great vocalist. When the sista sings or raps, it's all about enunciation. With her dry, spacey accent, she's like Lisa Bonet channeling Billie Holiday.

Tricky makes you thirsty listening to his parched, raspy voice on "Carriage for Two," a hymn to his daughter: "Hey T, I've got me a little black girl, and this little black girl's beautiful / I try to do what's dutiful / Teach her to lead." In counterpoint, Martina lazily riffs key verses and the chorus from "God Bless the Child" over jarring mechanistic beats. It's a family affair of the modern variety. In "Talk to Me," the duo deliver their haunted rap incantations over a random drum pattern and a meandering bass line, creating woozy music smoke rings. Rap as voodoo blues is what Tricky's jamming to—linking him in attitude with late jazz legend Miles Davis. Brothers of the rasp, it makes you wonder: If Miles had been an MC, would he have sounded like this?

On the last track, "Record Companies," he hocks a well-directed wad of spit at the predatory aspects of the record industry. Ranting in his most agitated spiteful hiss, Tricky taunts: "Now which one of you's gonna be the next nigger / You don't have to worry 'bout them / 2Pac holding hands with Biggie." In Tricky's heaven, the two great rappers have already made peace, while down below the rap game nurtures discord for dollars.

Angels... is Tricky's *White* album, or his *Black* album, depending on your taste in magic. It demonstrates the strengths of traditional songcraft ("Money Greedy," "The Moment I Feared," "You") yet is supported by brave, unorthodox music.

George Pitts

It took a lot of "Hang
Tyme"

for them to come back
with the verdict "Hung
Jury"

From the artist who's
first debut album went Platinum
with the hit singles:

"No More Lies"
"Something In My Heart"
"Nicety"

Michel'le
Hung Jury
coming soon

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:
SUZE KAYE



©1998 The "Unforgettable" Death Row Records. All Rights Reserved. For Promotional Use Only. Not For Sale.

Copyright © 1998

Lenny Kravitz

5

featuring "If You Can't Say No"

Produced, written, arranged and performed
by Lenny Kravitz

©1998 Virgin Records America, Inc.
www.virginrecords.com
AOL Keyword: Virgin Records

LP



MAISON MARTIN MARGIELA

GLORIA ESTEFAN 'GLORIA!' SONY/EPIC

Forget about Madonna. When it comes to constant creative reinvention, few can touch Gloria Estefan. Since sashaying into pop view roughly a decade ago as Miami Sound Machine's resident coquette with "Conga," she's been in a state of perpetual, often radical change—cruising from such disparate personas as Kewpie-doll pixie to serene Earth mama with deft ease. But though much is made of her competitors' every move, Estefan has evolved with an increasingly graceful, organic flow that has largely kept trend mongers from closely charting her growth and serving proper respect. On the spirited and notably youthful *gloria!*, however, she dons the persona of saucy disco vamp—a role that's clearly designed to rattle a few complacent consumer cages.

From the twinkly synths, romantic live strings, and vibrant house bass line of the set's lead cut, "Heaven's What I Feel," it's apparent that the introspective, Cuba-centric sound of 1996's "Destiny" is taking a backseat to the beat. Flexing all she's learned from studying her Donna Summer oldies, Estefan aggressively struts through the tune, stretching her creamy alto vocal range to heights worthy of a fierce, larger-than-life true diva—heights that she doesn't typically reach.

The ultimate beauty of *gloria!* is that Estefan never retreats to comfortable territory. Even the requisite Spanish-language tracks "Oye" and "Cuba Libre" have a ferocious new energy and a vocal spark that Estefan hasn't previously displayed. Props definitely belong to a posse of heavy-hitting young producers like Wyclef Jean and Soul Solution, who keep jams like "Don't Release Me" and "Lucky Girl" club-credible and Gloria properly playful. Ex-Latin Rascal and current red-hot remixer Tony Moran is a particularly prominent figure throughout the set, countering big-daddy Emilio Estefan's reliably smooth pop sound with omery percussion and a distinctive flair for keyboard melodrama that bring out the best in Gloria. In fact, she seems to be having so much fun here that it may be a while before we see another incarnation of this ever mobile pop chameleon.

Larry Flick

JOHN FORTE 'POLY SCI' COLUMBIA

Introduced on the Fugee's 1996 sophomore triumph, *The Score*, John Forte offered verbal flair to the album's collection of chart-topping remakes with his bellowing raps. His insights and distinct flow (think of rhyming while holding your breath) were solid contributions to songs such as "Family Business" and "Cowboys." Having since guested on the remix of Lauryn Hill's recent "The Sweetest Thing" as well as on Wyclef Jean's "We Trying to Stay Alive," Forte now presents his own solo album, *Poly Sci*.



JONATHAN MARSHON

Forte doesn't have the universal charm of his multiplatinum Refugee Camp recruiters, and at times his flow is a little too reminiscent of fellow Brooklynite Jay-Z.

ROOM SERVICE ROOM SERVICE' ELEKTRA

With their self-titled debut, Room Service knock on the door of an already congested R&B bordello. But these guys stand out because producer Allen "AllStar" Gordon (of SWV fame) provides the quintet with a distinct, textured sound. Throughout the album, the group beautifully and effortlessly flex their harmonizing muscles. Playing neither the extrasensitive nor the over-sexed-lover role, Room Service strike an even balance between vulnerability ("Twisted Emotions") and mack ability ("Put It on You"). Although the up-tempo, sure-hit "Sad Blue" bumps, it's the slow jams that glimmer. The dramatic "Say It, Mean It" and the yearning "Stay" (not a remake of Jodeci's 1991 gem) are further proof that Room Service are here to deliver the goods.

Hyun Kim

From left: Gary Wadd, June Archer, Kevin Brown, Bobby Burroughs, Delano Davis



REVOLUTIONS
BEATBOXING

But Forte's mostly self-produced debut employs a market-aware approach in its selection of underground manifestos and radio-destined rotations.

Hook-driven collaborations (like "They Got Me" with Fat Joe and the fierce "We Got This" with canine cohort DMC) supply undeniable street sparks. "Madina Passage," an equally motivating posse cut, features social commentary from Forte's band of Brooklyn brethren, while the humorous "All You Gotta Do" accurately depicts the superficial nature of the music biz.

Forte's slick monotone definitely scores highest with *Poly Sci*'s most commercial curricula. The heavily synthesized "P.B.E. (Powerful Beautiful Excellent)" is an infectious body rocker, as is the buoyant, Wyclef-produced "Ninety-Nine." The album highlight, "God Is Love God Is War," incorporates a Suzanne Vega vocal, which provides a bouncy backdrop for Forte's dichotomous life lessons.

Somewhat subtle in its attempts at mass appeal yet direct in achieving its unexpected sound, John Forte's *Poly Sci* plays like a crash course in hip hop macroeconomics. By translating trends into personal gain, this Fu-Gee-La exhaler convincingly makes the grade.

Durbin Chow



SIMPLY RED

BLUE

THE NEW ALBUM FEATURING "THE AIR THAT I BREATHE"



IN STORES MAY 19

Produced by Billy Wright, Gota Neeza, Mick Hudnall, Stevie J.

"The Air That I Breathe" remixed by Stevie J.

© 1998 Columbia Entertainment Group. A Division of Sony Music Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU
THE PLATINUM PURE DISCO SERIES...
IT'S TIME TO GET FUNKY

20 of the funkier tracks of all time on one incredible album



RICK JAMES - SUPER FREAK
COMMODORES - BRICK HOUSE
AVERAGE WHITE BAND - PICK UP THE PIECES
CHIC - GOOD TIMES

KOOL & THE GANG - JUNGLE BOOGIE
OHIO PLAYERS - FIRE

THE GAP BAND - EARLY IN THE MORNING

RUFOUS (Featuring Chaka Khan) - TELL ME SOMETHING GOOD

ROSE ROYCE - CAR WASH
ISAAC HAYES - SHAFT

CARL DOUGLAS - KUNG FU FIGHTING
PATTI LABELLE - LADY MARMALADE

CURTIS MAYFIELD - SUPERFLY

YARBROUGH & PEOPLES - DON'T STOP THE MUSIC

JEAN KNIGHT - MR. BIG STUFF

EARTH, WIND & FIRE - SHINING STAR
CAMEO - WORD UP

PARLIAMENT - FLASHLIGHT

PATRICE RUSHEN - FORGET ME NOTS

L.T.D. - (EVERY TIME I TURN AROUND) BACK IN LOVE AGAIN

ALSO AVAILABLE ON POLYDOR RECORDS:



IN STORES MAY 6TH
ON SALE AT ALL
BLOCKBUYS LOCATIONS

blockb
music

REVOLUTIONS
BY ROB KENNER

BOOM SHOTS

This is hotness. A mid-summer guide to the scorchers of today and to the superstars of tomorrow.

Sim-Simma: Late last year, Beenie Man sparked a joint named "Who Am I" (2 Hard/VP) that thrust raw, unremixed dancehall style into heavy rotation on urban radio and reached the *Billboard* charts in a rush. Of the 30-odd No. 1 Jamaican hits voiced by the great Moses Davis, this single for the upstart 2 Hard label is the biggest international success of his career. The digital groove that drives the big tune was built by a humble young producer named Jeremy Harding. He crafted the pulsating "Playground" riddim in his compact Kingston soundlab, which is frequented by rising stars such as Mr. Vegas, Don Yute, and Sean Paul—all of whom have hot records on the track.

Sean Paul's "Innuvate" has been the killing dub of choice at many a recent sound clash, but the fresh-minted deejay with the school-of-Supercat delivery is growing into the acclaim heaped upon him. Meanwhile, Mr. Vegas has followed his 2 Hard hit "Hands in the Air" (bigging up girls who "never get a slam yet if no busfare") with even stronger material—calling "Heads High" (Main Street/VP) on Danny Brown's steady-rocking "Filthy" riddim—making this sharp young vocalist with explosive deejay energy one of 1998's hottest new artists to watch.

As for Don Yute, he's been taking plane like taxicab since linking up with Jermaine Dupri during a 1996 stagershow in Atlanta. The fun-loving deejay has contributed raggamuffin stylings to both 1997's *So So Def Bass All-Stars* albums. He hung the gold plaques on his bedroom wall and used the royalty checks to launch the Golden Child label and a solo album of the same name because, he says, "I got to shine."

Dave Kelly and the Mad People crew always got the hot stuff cooking. First the "Rae Rae" riddim blew up in late 1997 with Lady Saw's "Eh Em" and Frisco Kid's "Living in Style." Then the Xtra Large posse busted out the "Showtime" riddim, a phenomenon that's now two albums deep plus plenty more 7-inches. *Showtime Jam* (XL/VP) contains an hour-long DJ mix of all the scorchers, along with conventional track-by-track selections; the standout being "Rain Again" by the gifted young vocalist Mr. Easy, who first made his name in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Be on the lookout for the hot new "Bashment" riddim and for the emergence of the Alias project, a highly secretive crew combining the talents of Spragga Benz, Frisco Kid, Baby Cham, Wayne Wonder, and Rude Boy Kelly. You have been warned.

Call the hearse: A singing sensation named Bushman is taking life with his wicked new album, *Nyah Man Chant* (Studio 2000/VP), produced by Steely & Clevie. Bushman flexes his nimble baritone on standouts like "Cannabis" and "Remember the Day." Grab this one. Killer B's: Bobby Konders and the Massive B crew have been knocking out the hits for 10 years now. Their latest, greatest 7-inch release, a Roots Radix version of the "Cuss Cuss" riddim, offers smoking verses by Shinehead, Anthony B., Tristan Palma, King Kong, and Burro Banton. In the meantime, Konders collaborator Yankee B. sees his debut album dropping on Gee Street Records this summer. Boasting duets with everybody from Sizzla to Big Punisher, Yankee B. is stirring up a distinctive raggamuffin rah-rah concoction.

Mr. Vegas



master p
aj johnson

SOUNDTRACK
FEATURING NEW SONGS BY

MASTER P • BOVE TRIPS & HARDY • KEE COLE • DJ EZ • MYSTIKAL •
SHARP DARTS BROS • SALKE THE SHOCKER • C-MURDER • AND MORE...
AVAILABLE ON NO LIMIT PRIORITY RECORDS

These two
operators
are about to
turn a truckload
of cell phones
into a boatload
of cash.

I got the

hook up hook-up

DIMENSION FILMS PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH NO LIMIT FILMS & PRIORITY FILMS A SHOOTING STAR PICTURES PRODUCTION A MASTER P AND MASTER P, A.J. JOHNSON "I GOT THE HOOK UP"
GRETCHEN PALMER TOMMY "TINY" LESTER, JR. HELEN MARTIN MIA F. ANTHONY BOSWELL SALKE THE SHOCKER C-MURDER MYSTIKAL MR. SERV ON AND JOHN WITHERSPOON STYLING DHANE ISAACS COSTUME DESIGNER ANDREW SHACK EDITOR TOMMY COSTER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BRAD FAIRMAN
PRODUCED BY T. DAVID BINNS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ANTONIO CALVACHE PRODUCED BY MICHAEL PEARCE PRODUCED BY ANDREW SHACK DIRECTED BY MASTER P EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY BRYAN TURNER EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY MASTER P EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY CARRIE MINGO EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY LEROY DOUGLAS EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY JONATHAN HEUER EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY MICHAEL MARTIN



www.dimensionfilms.com

©1999 NO LIMIT / PRIORITY FILMS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



coming soon to a theater near you



PRESENTS

"THE SOUL BOWL"

CALL THE NUMBER BELOW
212.563.VIBE
ENTER CODE 150

AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PREVIEW THE LATEST R&B/SOUL JAMS. CHOOSE YOUR FAVORITE JAM AND THE ONE WITH THE MOST VOTES WINS THE BOWL. EACH MONTH WE'LL POST PAST RESULTS AS WELL AS OFFER NEW SONGS FOR COMPETITION.

164 LEVI LITTLE
"Pick Up The Phone"
Soul Connection
White Label Music

165 MECHALIE JAMISON
"Keep It Real"
I Got The Hook Up (sdtk)
Red Eye/Priority Records

166 TAMIA
"Falling For You"
Tamia
Qwest Records

APRIL COCA-COLA "SOUL BOWL" RESULTS: The competition was fierce but, as fate would have it, *Bonny's* *Cliff* came in at #1 with a whopping 336 votes for their smash hit "No, No, No (Part 2)." *111's* soulful rendition of "After The Love Has Gone" came in a close second with 290 votes. *Diana's* laid back groove "So Good" and *Tina Marie's* with her interpretation of "Washing On A Star" battled it out for third and fourth place respectively.



You will be charged for a regular telephone call into the (212) NYC area code. QUESTIONS? Call Touch Tunes at 212-643-1853. Lines active from 5/5 to 6/2/93.

DAVID SANCHEZ 'OBSESIÓN' COLUMBIA

As if guided by Oshun, 29-year-old tenor/soprano saxophonist David Sanchez plots a fresh course through the deep with his splendid fourth album, *Obsesión*. He has created a dynamic synthesis of jazz/classical tropes as well as Central/South American/Afro-Caribbean rhythms, motifs, and sensibilities. Blessed with the biting romanticism of Gato Barbieri, the merciful fluidity of Sonny Rollins, and a Puerto Rican soul, Sanchez masterfully reinvents seven Latin standards (plus Ray Bryant's "Cuban Fantasy"). From "Lamento Borincano"—with its exhilarating rush of swinging *clave*, *bomba*, and *plena*—to the soprano-and-strings champagne afterglow of "Esa Mujer," *Obsesión* sweetly sings tomorrow's favorite jazz.

Tom Terrell



MONEY MARK 'PUSH THE BUTTON' MO'WAX RECORDINGS/LONDON

Father, carpenter, electronics fetishist, and part-time Beastie keyboardist, Mark Ramos-Nishita exhibited many personalities on his mostly instrumental 1996 debut, *Mark's Keyboard Repair*. For everyone who knew that the "acid-jazz thing" of a few years ago was lame and derivative, it was a pleasant surprise to hear Mark's stuff. Alternating between '70s soul-jazz that would bring a smile to Fred Sanford's face and 80s-laced experimental beats that would bring a tear to underground head noddas, *MKR* was tailor-made for children weaned on the perfect beat.

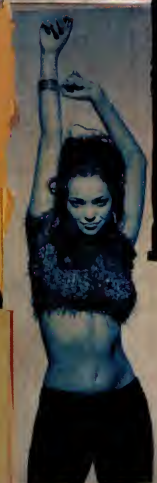
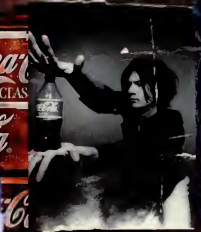
Push the Button finds Money Mark exorcising his '80s demons; not "expect any Puffy-style homicides of your favorite K-Tel hits. Instead, you get slicker production and longer songs. But unless your favorite movie is still *The Breakfast Club*, skip past the lame college alt-rock stylings of "Tomorrow Will Be Like Today" and the dumb "I Don't Play Piano." More successful are songs like "Trust," which sounds like the Art of Noise reinterpreting the theme from 1981's *Chariots of Fire*.

Mark excels even further in 1960s and 1970s soul territory. "Too Like You" poses the question, What if the Beatles had hitched a ride onto Berry Gordy's hit-making machine? "Underside It All" and "Destroyer" successfully continue Mark's quirky genre bending, while "PowerHouse" laughs at the kind of drum 'n' bass that has recently become yuppified Muzak.



Ultimately, some might attribute the small shortcomings of Ramos-Nishita's latest album to sophomore slump, but that's not fair. After he released his first 10-song LP independently, he added 10 songs to its overseas Mo' Wax debut and added 10 more songs for its domestic, major-label release; therefore, maybe it's more appropriate to liken Mark's lack of cohesion on *Push the Button* to that of an honor student coming down with senioritis.

Brent Rollins



This month
Coca-Cola celebrates
the full range and
diversity of black
music. The
beat goes on.



© 1999 The Coca-Cola Company. "Coca-Cola" the Dynamic Ribbon Device and the Red Circle, script and word marks are trademarks of The Coca-Cola Company.



'80s underground rap

THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION

Public Enemy

Boogie Down Productions

Jungle Brothers

EPMD

Schooly-D

Special Ed

& more



ON THREE CDs

ALSO AVAILABLE:
THE BEST OF THE SUGARHILL GANG &
THE BEST OF GRANDMASTER FLASH & THE FURIOUS FIVE

AVAILABLE AT

BEST BUY

RHINO



VARIOUS ARTISTS 'FROM WHERE I STAND: THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN COUNTRY MUSIC' WARNER BROS.

For centuries, southern white and black populations have crossed paths on dirt roads and faced off in bayou bars, on tobacco plantations, and in Baptist churches—walking a virtual Mason-Dixon line between hospitality and hostility. So it's no surprise that, as claimed in the liner notes to *From Where I Stand: The Black Experience in Country Music*, those African-Americans immersed in hillbilly sounds make up 24 percent of the black adult radio audience. Obsessed with farm, family, religion, alcohol, and movin' on, this collection of songs—all credited to black performers—documents the gray areas wherein two rural cultures collide.

The first disc (of three), covering the '20s through '40s, goes heavy on black guys either strumming folk standards (like Leadbelly) or crossing over to the Grand Ole Opry crowd with proto-rap, square dance—call novelties grumbled around a pickle barrel. Give or take a couple of social spoofs, like the Memphis Sheikhs' great "In the Jailhouse Now," nearly all of these tracks are about trains and are sonically inspired by the rails they were composed on.

From the outset, early country music came mainly from drunk, minstrel show—bred white folks tackling the blues, taking fleet-fiddled rhythms from European reels and waltzes while deriving bounce from ragtime and banjos from Africa. So, from the Mississippi Shicks' appropriating Jimmie Rodgers's blues yodels in 1930 to the Staple Singers' reviving a Carter Family spiritual in 1966 to Barrence Whitfield's turning a Merle Haggard parable about interracial love on its head in 1994, a lot of *From Where I Stand* is black drawing on white drawing on black.

The story inevitably evolves into newly settled urban- and suburbanites yearning for the midnight train to Georgia: Arthur Alexander missing the farm as he makes cars in Detroit, O.B. McClinton lamenting the green grass next door. Inspired by sepiat Sinatra's Nat "King" Cole and Johnny Mathis, the collection's crooners—like Solomon Burke, Nashville's eternal token Charley Pride, and '90s Country Music Television fixture Cleve Francis—sandwich their sad collar-green ballads between white-bread strums and harmonies, miraculously managing to make prefab sappiness feel warm.

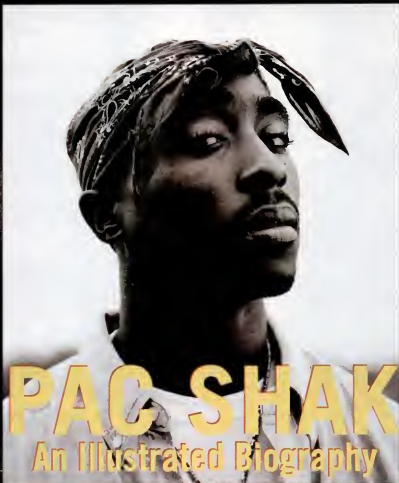
Not every jump-blueser or Motown coverer Hank or Willie on these discs adapts naturally to country's sway. But certain superstars—Al Green, Fats Domino, and, most famously, Ray Charles—do surprisingly well on this very complete boxed set. There are notable omissions: "Little Ole Country Boy" by Parliament, "She" by Sylvester, and "Stuck on You" by Lionel Richie—not to mention the work of Bill Withers, Swamp Dog, O.C. Smith, O.V. Wright, and O.K. Corral. (Sorry, podner, I made that last one up—I couldn't resist.)

Chuck Eddy

THE BOOK. THE LIFE. THE LAST WORD.

Compiled by the editors of VIBE, this is the definitive biography of this generation's most controversial hip-hop artist, from his childhood as the son of a former Black Panther and his explosive arrival on the hip-hop scene, to his highly publicized rivalries and arrests and his violent death at age 25.

Photo Credit: Dana Lundberg



TUPAC SHAKUR includes more than 125 full-color exclusive photographs from VIBE's archives, a foreword by Quincy Jones, an introduction by Danyel Smith, and a wealth of never-before-published material, including memorial tributes from John Singleton and Ernest Dickerson and the text from a complete on-line interview with Tupac.

TUPAC SHAKUR

An Illustrated Biography

By the Editors of VIBE Magazine
Foreword by Quincy Jones

May Tupac Shakur rest in peace, and may the rest of us live in it.

AT BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE

<http://www.randomhouse.com>



CROWN



Redman
Keith Murray
Erick Sermon

FEATURING THE SINGLES:
"FULL COOPERATION"
"RAPPER'S DELITE"

THE ALBUM
IN STORES
JUNE 30



©1998 TEST AND HARRIS GROUP, INC.

REVOLUTIONS THIS IS AN A/B CONVERSATION

FLY TRACKS OR WACK WAX? ASK OUR RESIDENT CRITICS, A&B.

"Just Happy to Be Me," The Fugees, *Elimopalooza* (Sony)

A: I'm feelin' this. Damn, I wish I had educational music like this to listen to when I was growing up. I probably would have learned my ABCs a whole lot quicker. This is really catchy. Lauryn rips everything she sings. Who else could have ripped their ABCs? **B:** Lauryn is so *ill*. So is Wyclef. Pras is the only one who sucks on this song. He has nothing to say, and whatever he is saying doesn't rhyme. **A:** But this is still a really dope song.



The Fugees

"Till I Get Over You," Brian McKnight, *Anytime* (Mercury)

B: Brian McKnight's voice is flavorless on this song. He sounds like any other R&B artist out there. **A:** I disagree. He has a beautiful voice, but the lyrics are pathetic. **B:** Yeah [laughter]. **A:** And the little Asian-sounding rhythms in the beginning are slightly annoying. **B:** I think those sounds are actually pretty interesting.



Brian McKnight

"Shaqueen Rules," Shaqueen, *Shaqueen* (Mighty)

A: Whooooo. I like that little line about how she's "tight like the hymen." **B:** I'm kinda afraid of her. I keep having flashbacks of seeing Boss standing in a hallway with big guns, back in '93. **A:** Abhhh, shit. And Boss went to prep school, so that makes me wonder about Shaqueen's background. I have no idea what she's talking about. The beat is danceable, but I'm not feelin' it lyrically. She seems almost *too* hardcore to be believable.

"Let Your Spirit Fly," Kimberly Scott, *Kimberly Scott* (Columbia)

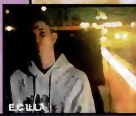
A: I cannot believe Kimberly is only eleven years old. She's got a strong voice that falls somewhere between Whitney Houston's and Monica's. This song sounds like it could be on a soundtrack to a Disney film or something. **B:** Yeah, definitely. I keep thinking about *An American Tale* while listening to this. It's really amazing that she's eleven and sings like a freakin' grown-ass woman of twenty-five. Her voice is incredible. **A:** She's a woman-child. The song is sweet, very uplifting, and very heartfelt. **B:** Word.

"Old School Tactics," E.C. ILLA, *Power Moves* (Cargo)

A: I need an Excedrin! He is not using any old school tactics here. The only thing that sounds old school is "Rock, rock, y'all / To the funky cut / A freak, freak, y'all," and he can't even do that right! But the beat has a cool, laid-back, West Coast feel. **B:** I like it. I think he's got *real* skillz. Besides Common, he's basically the only other large MC out of Chicago. Also, the beat is kinda hot. I really like the track. **A:** Yeah, I can see myself in a car bouncing to this. I'm feeling the Midwest through E.C. ILLA, but I still don't know what "Old School Tactics" he's talking about.



Kimberly Scott



E.C. ILLA



CORMEGA 'TESTAMENT' VIOLATOR

Before there was Capone-N-Noreaga or Mobb Deep or even Nas, there was Cormega. One of Queensbridge's original reps, Cormega first appeared on little-known QB duo PHD's 1990 LP *Without Warning* (Tuff City). But before Cormega got the chance to follow his rap aspirations, he went to prison (remember the shoutout from Nas on *Illmatic*'s "One Love"?). Back in the world, 'Mega endured a short-lived stint as a member of the Firm. Now, after much trials and tribulation, there is finally a *Testament* to the skills of Cormega.

The Bridge is inextricably bonded to 'Mega's blood, and it remains reflected in both his flow and vocal inflection—echoing vintage Nas and Mobb Deep. One of the album's more intriguing songs is "One Love," a letter from jail in response to Nas's original. Despite reports of beef between the two, this isn't a dis record; rather, it acts as an epilogue to Escobar's epic. But the album's best song by far is its title track. After a beautifully haunting string intro, Cormega rhymes over a crushing drum beat and a collage of chilling vocal samples: "Deep thoughts / Supreme courts deceiving me / Trapped in the belly like the beast was conceiving me... / I'm too real for you / What you dream I live and breathe." This future classic is not only



ULTRA NATÉ

'SITUATION: CRITICAL' STRICTLY RHYTHM

After nine years of scrounging for mainstream recognition, Ultra Naté finally hit pop paydirt last year with "Free," an anthem that blessed summer radio like a refreshing cool breeze. On her third album, *Situation: Critical*, Naté vigorously aims to accelerate that hard-won mainstream momentum. Nothing here matches the intangible magic of "Free," but there are a number of provocative gems, including "Love You Can't Deny" and "Any Ole Love." Her commanding way with a chorus is on par with any pop superstar—as evidenced by the teeth-grashing fury with which she rips into the line "Feel like I'm going insane," which fuels the soon-to-be hit "Found a Cure." Naté's undoubtedly got the goods to go the full distance. *Larry Flick*

REVOLUTIONS
BEARDFOLLOWING

an indictment of posur drug-dealer MCs; it's a testament to the sincerity of 'Mega's own experiences. 'Mega filters only on the cheesy duet with Foxy Brown, "Slow Down Yo," which uses a beat similar to the EPMD classic. Although *Testament* hardly nominates him as the greatest rapper to emerge from QB, Cormega's style exemplifies everything that Queensbridge fans love. Queens still rules.

Noah Callahan-Bever

Sock-a-Knee
(SAUCONY)
THE ORIGINAL RUNNING SHOE

jazz

800-348-7282 • SAUCONY.COM

www.hyponline.com

HY

Foot Locker

AVAILABLE AT SELECTED STORES IN THESE METROPOLITAN AREAS
NEW YORK LOS ANGELES SAN FRANCISCO DALLAS CHICAGO
WASHINGTON D.C. DETROIT MIAMI

REVIBE BACK ISSUES



To order back issues of VIBE send issue date or cover description and \$7 per copy (check or money order made out to ISI-VIBE) to: ISI, 30 Montgomery St. Jersey City, NJ 07302 Attn: Back Issues. Or call 1-800-544-6748. Allow four to six weeks for delivery.

then filed suit against the estate, claiming to be a part-owner of the label. Woods-Wright and Klein settled out of court for an undisclosed amount.

"Klein thought he was going to be the person to step up and take Jerry Heller's place and be the confidant, the person getting the percentage," says Woods-Wright. "He basically underestimated my relationship with Eric and underestimated me. I wasn't just another woman who laid on her back and fucked Eric. I did have business knowledge. He didn't think I would be there."

In the final days of Eazy-E's life, as he lay in his bed at L.A.'s Cedars-Sinai Hospital struggling for breath, the rapper grew more serious about documents and legalities than ever before in his life. His marriage to Tomica Woods 12 days before his death and his careful construction of a will both suggest a last-minute conversion, a realization that too much was at stake to simply follow his usual instincts and say "Fuck it."

That's one view. Some, however, claim that Eazy was barely conscious and that Woods-Wright exerted unfair control over him at the end. They point to his marriage certificate, filled out in the hospital but never signed by the rapper (the marriage did hold up in court). They also suggest it was more than loving concern that prompted Woods-Wright to hospitalize him under an alias and move him from room to room while carefully screening his visitors. They wonder why a man who was famous for living life day to day, who had various girlfriends calling him at the hospital, would unexpectedly pledge his love to one woman.

According to Charis Henry, Eazy's former executive assistant, she asked Wright just days before he got married if he was planning to get hitched. Snatching off his oxygen mask, he snarled, "Hell no."

Henry also questions some of Woods-Wright's decisions regarding the rapper's health care. "I felt that she was not being real persistent in getting different remedies to cure him. I felt that she gave up on him," says Henry.

Woods-Wright—who says, like most others who knew him, that she didn't know that Eazy had AIDS until after he went into the hospital—also says she did everything she could for her husband, and dismisses the criticism as the fantasies of conspiracy theorists. "Opinions are like assholes—everybody's got one," says Woods-Wright. "It was not the cause of his death. I did not kill him. I was the one by his side, and I am the one trying to keep his dream alive. As far as anybody else who might be saying stuff, I could give a damn."

At Cedars-Sinai, Henry says the saw lawyers carrying papers in and out of Wright's hospital room. She told the rapper she wanted to make a copy of the will and have her own attorney look it over. "I didn't ever get a chance to do that," she says. "It was signed on the spot. I know it was probably at least one hundred pages, and I know he didn't read it because he didn't even read music agreements. Sometimes I would read them for him."

During the 30 days Eazy spent in the hospital, amid rumors that he was everywhere—and so were threats. Old girlfriends were calling with warnings for Woods-Wright. Other women appeared saying they were close to the rapper (one of whom said she was HIV-positive and filed a lawsuit against his estate). Hooked up to a respirator and barely able to move, Eazy-E prepared for death as the balance of power began to shift. Tracy Jemigan (one of the mothers who unsuccessfully contested Eazy's will) had to go around Woods-Wright to visit the rapper in the hospital. She later caught up with Woods-Wright, surrounded by Ruthless paperwork, in a visiting room.

"She sat there with Ruthless checks on her lap," recalls Jemigan. "Making out checks, like, 'He won't be here anymore. You see who's running things now.'"

"Yeah, I had paperwork there," replies Woods-Wright. "But for me to say something like that, to be that cruel—anyone who would say that about me is just being malicious."

Whatever else there is to argue over, Woods-Wright is running things now. And if she is making more money than ever before, she says it's not the wealth that has changed her life forever but the unwanted attention: "There was a lot less stress, a lot less responsibility, a lot less burden the way it was before."

That unwanted attention is likely to increase with the upcoming Heller lawsuit and Ruthless's attempt to make a fresh run at the charts. There's nothing sadder than a gangster who doesn't know his time has passed, and if fans get a whiff that Ruthless is stuck in the past, they aren't likely to bother. Meanwhile, new stars such as Sean "Puffy" Combs and Minnie Elliott represent a reaction against blood-and-guns rap and, perhaps, the sign of things to come. In this atmosphere it will take genius, and more than a little luck, to make Ruthless matter again.

The widow sits at her desk at the Ruthless offices, the bookshelves behind her still empty. She's here, but she hasn't fully moved in yet. If Woods-Wright has devised a detailed battle plan for reintroducing the label, she's keeping it under wraps.

"I've had a lot of harsh things said about me," she reflects, "—that I didn't care about Eazy, that I forced him to marry me, that I'm the one that killed him. You kind of have to sit there and take it. I could fight whoever, but I kept my head up."

Her voice cracks here, and tears run down her cheek. "I'm not going to let you break me down," Woods-Wright says, as if addressing all her past and future critics at once. "I've got to be strong for the children that I've birthed on my own and for the other children that he left behind. So think what you want to think, say what you want to say—it's all a matter of opinion." □

BUDDY GUY 'HEAVY LOVE' SILVERTONE

God bless Buddy Guy. While most of his fellow blues legends are content to sleepwalk through mediocre records and package tours that sound like clinics in 12-bar boredom, the 62-year-old Chicago guitarist keeps his inner flame burning brightly by avoiding the genre's formulaic cul-de-sacs. Rather than recycle the usual played-out repertoire, *Heavy Love* keeps things



fresh by embracing ZZ Top, acoustic balladry, jump blues, even dance music textures without sounding (are you listening, John Lee Hooker?) gratuitously eclectic.

The secret ingredient behind *Heavy Love's* wide-open approach is producer David Z., who, in addition to producing white-boy blues phenoms Jonny Lang and Kenny Wayne Shepherd, has also toiled as an arranger for Prince—which means that there's something slightly askew on even the most standard, balls-to-the-wall guitar workouts. The title track's smoldering funk-blues groove is laced with electronic hand claps; "Midnight Train" is anchored by a nasty fuzz-tone bass line; and Guy's ZZ Top cover, "Need You Tonight," features synthesized strings.

But don't think that *Heavy Love* is some slick attempt at a career makeover. Guy still knows on which side his bread is buttered, and the album's 11 tracks are all constructed around his elegantly gruff vocals and shifty guitar lines, which sting like sulfuric acid throughout. In fact, *Heavy Love's* most powerful track is its most sparingly produced. A moving meditation on tattered love, the nearly eight-minute "Did Someone Make a Fool Outta You" is a stately ballad whose unhurried pace echoes Isaac Hayes's melodramatic minidramas of the early '70s. Singing in a broken-down craggy whisper, Guy desperately tries to woo a gunshy lover while his acoustic guitar gently wails underneath him. Few artists of Guy's generation are willing to dig down this deep anymore; this track and others on *Heavy Love* prove that Guy's commitment to his material extends beyond whether or not it plays well on the summer festival circuit. *Marc Weingarten*

TAMI DAVIS 'ONLY YOU' RED ANT



In her tranquil debut, *Only You*, Tami Davis sings about the intense pain and pleasure women feel when they're really in love. But while her deep, full voice is akin to (but not as passionate as) Toni Braxton's, it's sometimes difficult to tell exactly what Tami is feeling—even when she's begging her man for forgiveness, as on the pulsating first single, "How Do I Say I'm Sorry." Still, her voice is very pretty, and ladies can relate to her empowering messages ("Can't Take No More") and delicate demands ("Serve Me Right"). Although Tami's unadventurous style can start to sound dull after 11 tracks, *Only You* is smooth and solid. *Kwell L. Wright*



groove
COMPANY

GETCHA GROOVE ON AT: Active Warehouse / Transit • Bloomington
Dr. Joy's • Mr. Rags • Nordstrom • The Lark • Wish • Macy's East/West

Groove Co. (West) 310.576.2777 (East) 212.354.1877 ©1998 Groove Company
Photos: Alphonso Morris Jr.

FROM THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GROUP CAPONE-N-MOREAGA,
PENALTY RECOMMENDS THROBBING BUT ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

N.O.R.E.

THE ALBUM - OUT JUNE

FEATURING BUSTA RHYMES, BIG PUN, CAM'RON, NATURE, CHICO DEBARSE, KOOL G RAP AND OTHERS...PLUS TRACKS BY TRACKMASTERS, NABHIE MYRIK, MARLEY MARL, RUFFRIDERS, CLUE AND DURO AND MORE.

CAPONE-N-MOREAGA: STILL REPORTING. YA HEARD!



PHOTOGRAPHED AND
STYLED BY JIM
FISHER FOR MCA/REPRISE



REVOLUTIONS
BY CRISTINA VERAN

EL RITMO

Rock en español (rock sung in Spanish) is steadily conquering North and South America via bands like Cafe Tacuba and Los Fabulosos Cadillacs. Its American-influenced rock rhythms (infused with Latin melodies) appeal to just about everybody. Now, though, *Chicano alternativo*, a growing music scene born on the West Coast, is fighting to get a tiny bite of the big burrito. Unlike the basically northreathening sound and lyrics that have come to be categorized as rock en español, alternativo performers like Ollin and Quetzal mostly sing in response to the harsh realities of life in East Los Angeles—and about what it *really* means to be Latino in America. The lyrics are almost always performed in English, and the music is a cacophonous cadre of influences, including reggae, folk, punk, and ska.

In a stratified music industry where so often white equals rock, black equals R&B/rap, and Latino equals salsa, Chicano alternativo's war to gain the recognition of rock is far from won.

East L.A. native Lysa Flores is one performer who has emerged as a major name in the Chicano alternativo game. This kick-ass songstress refuses to be categorized by society's stifling labels. "Just because I'm Latina," Lysa explains, "the major labels and the clubs automatically want to put me in the rock en español category." She also says that since the rise of rock en español, labels constantly insist that she sing in Spanish. They think Lysa has the potential to become the next Selena. "It's absurd," she says, laughing. "They don't ask Gwen Stefani [front woman for No Doubt] to sing in Italian! I'm Chicana, but I don't want to alienate *anyone* from listening to my music—white, black, Puerto Rican, whatever."

In an effort to really make herself stand out, Flores has contributed songs to a number of recent compilations, including the 1997 soundtrack to Fox Searchlight's *Star Maps* (DGC) and the 1997 compilation *Barrios Artistas Volume I* (Mexnut). Lysa is also the music supervisor and costar of a forthcoming film called *White Boy* (B.I.G. Films). It's an independent production featuring rappers Warren G and W.C.

Determined to use the momentum and money gained from these projects to her advantage, she recently launched an L.A.-based indie label called Bring Your Love Records. It's on this label that Flores released her powerful debut, *Ties of Hope*. The title refers to a Frida Kahlo painting that represents women's struggles in the face of immense adversity. The album is all about encouraging women to hold on to that last piece of hope and features Lysa's achingly angst-filled anthem "Beg Borrow & Steal." The 12-track disc is a tapestry of tales about modern-day Fridas; Lysa's impassioned prose succinctly reflects their every tear and triumph. She's only just begun to bloom.

For more information on Lysa Flores, contact Bring Your Love Records (626-279-3161) at 3474 East First Street, Suite 115, Los Angeles, CA 90063. Also, if you're digging this column, write to: *El Ritmo*, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Lysa



CHIPPEWA
CONCRETE JUNGLE

CITY RUGGED

COMFORT
you WON'T
BELIEVE



Stock #90327A

Stock #90327B

A SPORT BOOT FOR THE
CONCRETE JUNGLE THE AMERICAN Tradition

Street smart fashion colors. Tough leather construction. Pillow soft insoles. Vibrom lug outsoles. Everything a boot needs for survival in the most rugged environment. Better boot up. It's a jungle out there.

VARIOUS ARTISTS 'HAV PLENTY' SOUNDTRACK

Y&B YUM/550 MUSIC

Hav Plenty's eclectic roster makes the soundtrack to the film savory to virtually any palate. Although not as creative as the ethereal *love Jones* soundtrack or as solid in production as the soundtrack to *Balworth*, *Hav Plenty* still manages choice moments.

Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds (who with his wife, Tracey, exec produces the film and the soundtrack) and British singer Des'ree open the compilation with a fierce version of the Pointer Sisters' 1978 "Fire." Then the sprightly "Keep It Real," featuring Jon B., SWV's Coko, and Jay-Z successfully marries lighthearted R&B with hip hop. But when the generic party anthem "Rock the Body," from Queen Pen and Tracey Lee, fails to motivate, it's up to Method Man (along with Jayo Felony and DMX) to save the day with "Whatcha Gonna Do": "Fuck peace / And all them crooked cops on the beat / My niggas bring the funk / Like your grandpa's feet / 'Til death do us part / Save my bullets for the chart."

On the R&B tip, Chico DeBarge wins with his persuasive delivery on the Joe-produced and vocally backed "Any Other Night": "You say (You

say) that you're just not ready for love right

now / But the loneliness would kill me tonight / So baby just lay / I'm not gonna do nothin' that you don't want me to." Faith's melancholic "Tears Away," produced by former Hit Man Chucky Thompson, is subtly orchestral. Its simple drum pattern, understated rattle, and mellifluous strings allow Faith's emotions to take center stage: "I carried on / In life alone / No one to hold / But I'm still strong."

Elsewhere, Shy'a's stale "Can't Help It" and Az Yet's "What the Hell Do You Want" crash the high induced by the soundtrack's otherwise soulful symphony. Dull interludes aside, *Hav Plenty's* stylistics are worthy.

Raquel Cepeda



MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD 'COMBUSTICATION' BLUE NOTE

Medeski, Martin & Wood understand that funk is an elusive, metaphysical thing—attitude, action, and context all at once. And that's exactly why their sixth album, *Combustication*, is sublime. First, keyboardist John Medeski does an inspired, gospel-y deconstruction of Sly & the Family Stone's 1969 "Everyday People." And second, because the jazz trio are constantly coming up with surprisingly groovy ways to tickle your brain, turntablist DJ Logic adds juice to innovative cuts like "Sugarcraft" and "Church of Logic." Long after many neofunksters have surrendered the flag and moved on to less demanding territory, MMW continue to find fresh ground in the cosmic slop.

Tony Green



From left: John Medeski, Billy Martin, Chris Wood

The disc is mini. So what's the big noise about?

Sony calls it MD—MiniDisc.

Maybe you've seen the ads for it. They're gorgeous. But frankly, they don't tell you much.

For example, you can record an entire album onto MiniDisc or make a "hits" mix of your favorite songs, and then add, delete or move songs around without having to start all over.

There's a lot more, too, and Crutchfield is where you'll find it. Just go to our website or call for our free catalog and see.



Crutchfield—authorized website and catalog for Sony, Sony MiniDisc, and virtually every other top audio and video brand, too.

on the web:
www.crutchfield.com/md
or call for your FREE catalog:
1-888-292-2591 toll-free

CRUTCHFIELD
Home Audio • Car Stereo • Video • Home Theater



THE DOCUMENTTM ANDY SMITH

PORTISHEAD'S TOUR OEEJAY

FEATURING

GRANDMASTER FLASH • JUNGLE BROTHERS • THE JAMES GANG • TOM JONES • JERU THE DAMAJA
THE SPENCER DAVIS GROUP • CLOCKWORK VODOO FREAKS • PEGGY LEE • G.I. TROOPERS
G.B. • MARVIN GAYE • THE METERS • LOVE UNLIMITED • JEEP BEAT COLLECTIVE

AVAILABLE MAY 10, 1998
COMPACT DISC CASSETTE AND UNMIXED DOUBLE VINYL



REPRODUCTION

THE DEBUT ALBUM FROM

mya

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
Missy Elliot and Sisqo

INCLUDES SONGS WRITTEN
AND PRODUCED BY
Dru Hill, Babyface,
Dianne Warren
and Mya.



#212

First Smash Single
"It's All About Me"



GET TO MYA
1-900-263-2212
www.interscoperecords.com

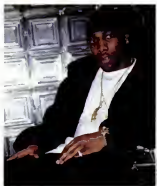
Also check out *Mya* in
the Ghetto Supastar
video featuring Pras and
Ol' Dirty Bastard now
playing on MTV #113

UNIVERSITY
ONE HOUR ONE GROOVE
FROM INTERSCOPE RECORDS
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Self-Titled Album, MYA

IN STORES NOW!

MCGRUFF 'DESTINED TO BE' UNIVERSAL



With his debut, *Destined to Be*, MCGruff is determined to make you dance. He sounds best on songs like "Harlem Kids Get Biz," in which he comes with a hard, edgy rhyme style over swirling, echoing rhythms. 'Gruff also does his thing on the infectious "Many Know," with its catchy start-stop flow and pulsating Jamaican groove. If anything, it's tired topics such as wining, dining, and counting cheddar that compromise 'Gruff's interesting lyric modus

operandi. But the booty-shakin' beats and sometimes fun, singsong lyric spew make the album worth listening to. MCGruff has taken a bite outta the 1980s party vibe and successfully recaptured it for the late '90s set.

Spence D



MYA'MYA' UNIVERSITY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT/INTERSCOPE

Mya Harrison, 18, is not another whipsmy Loita-esque chanteuse backed by jacked chords and overproduced beats. Instead, she offers 12 soulful, heartfelt songs on her sparkling, self-titled debut. "What Cha Say," written and coproduced by Mya, is a funky, Prince-like party jam that dares you to not rush the dance floor. The beautifully arranged Babyface-penned tune "My First Night With You" is perfected by her sweet (but never fragile) soprano, reminiscent of Faith's. This Washington, D.C. native always sings with a voice that is clear, strong, and assured. Combining round-the-way girl saas with an artist's sensibility, Mya has created a jewel.

Ayana D. Byrd



ANGGUN 'ANGGUN' EPIC

Twenty-three-year-old Anggun is a cherished, multiplatinum artist in her native Indonesia. Now, her aching, Annie Lennox-flavored vocals are shining on her outstanding, self-titled American debut. Songwriter/producer Erick Benzi (Celine Dion) enriched Anggun with deep, passionate verses ("Snow on the Sahara") and soothing, synthesized instrumentation (including chimes, symbols, rain sticks, and flutes). Anggun's titillating rendition of David Bowie's melodramatic 1972 "Life on Mars" offers a welcome, spiritual journey to ancient civilizations. Sometimes the hypnotic Eurasian soundscapes can sound a bit too New Age trendy and trite, but Anggun's voice is always beautiful—and therefore of importance.

Mykella Van Cooten

those who fail to build
cease to exist in the
world of entertainment



nyc hilton • august 5-9 • '98

1998 topics:

music-exploring the generation gap
marketing-from Ethnic to Urban
fashion-and the Winner is...
music-the producer's panel
sports-the future of Sports Marketing
film-from the Small Screen to the Big Screen
industry-for Women Only
radio-Sink or Swim
music retail-the Importance of Sell thru

television-from turntable to the tube
image building-management and fashion
urban world film festival-panels and Screenings
power clinic-the 10 Commandments
of Urban Marketing
power clinic-the Anatomy of a Hit
power clinic-the Pulse of America • a focus Study
big willie panel-bigger and Willie than Ever
fifth anniversary black-tie-Benefit Dinner & Party

for more information call 212.448.7328

I thought I told ya that it won't sink...



2. Shouldn't Mystikal's throat hurt?
3. After seeing Aaliyah looking gorgeous in a gown and heels at the Oscars, don't you want her to cut back a little on the Tommy gear? 4. But then, after homegirl performed during the award ceremonies, weren't you kind of

fiending for some Aretha?
5. Did anyone

20 QUESTIONS

else catch Walter Moseley at that recent HBO party for



1. Is it now safe to say that *Titanic* is the Puff Daddy of movies?

Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned (the film based on his 1997 novel) desperately flippin' through *Jet* looking for the Beauty of the Week? 6. Don't you still miss Robin Harris—especially after watching the tired-ass, no-talent—having *Wayans Bros.*? 7. James Dean, Jack Daniels, Jermaine Dupri—who is the real J.D.? 8. Now that Lil' Kim has bought her-

self a Foxy-esque chest, will she be known as the Ill Ta-Tas?

9. Why does Canibus have a tattoo of a mike inside a fist on his bicep with "4-3-2-1" written on the fingers? 10. Are we the only ones who

Dolly my baby



miss the original cast of the TV version of *Fame*? 11. Why is Danja Mowf's "14 Ladies" the best

orgy rap since Black Sheep's 1991 "La Ménage" (featuring Q-Tip)? 12. What exactly did Redman mean in 1996's "Yesh Yesh Ya'll" when he said, "Male groupies gettin' shaky when I come from the rear"? 13. Doesn't *Krik?* *Krak!* author Edwidge Danticat liter-

ally look like a doll? 14. Is DJ Quik a missing member of the DeBarge fami-

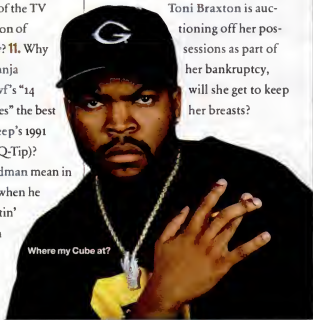


They're gonna live forever

ly? 15. Whatever happened to Crystal Pepsi? 16. Has Madonna joined a New Age cult, or is that just her new look? 17. Wasn't it a stroke of genius for Ice "Wesside!" Cube to put the East Coast stalwart DMX on the "We Be Clubbin'"

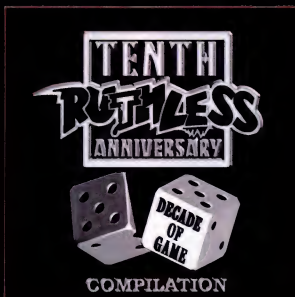
remix? 18. Did Keenan Ivory Wayans have a talk show for a hot minute, or was that just a long *Psychic Friends* *Network* commercial? 19. Isn't Syll-E. Fine too old to be trapped in her bedroom by her parents in the "Romeo and Juliet" video? 20. And finally, if

Toni Braxton is auctioning off her possessions as part of her bankruptcy, will she get to keep her breasts?



Where my Cube at?

THE SAGA CONTINUES...



IN STORES NOW!!!!

N.W.A. • Eazy-E • MC Ren • H.W.A. • JJ FAD • Above The Law • The D.O.C. • Michel'le
ALSO FEATURING TWO NEW TRACKS FROM EAZY-E
24 Hrs. To Live & Black Ni**a Killa



Ruthless For Life The new single from the album

Ruthless For Life

Coming Soon

Also featuring songs with: Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg & Eightball & MJG



www.ruthlessrecords.com ©1997 Ruthless Records. All Rights Reserved.



Copyright © 1997

Technics

SL1200-MKII Pro Turntable

The Choice of DJs, Remixers, and Radio Stations Worldwide

- Direct Drive • Quartz Locked Pitch Control • Rugged Fast Start Motor • Electronic Braking System • Soft Touch Stop/Start • Pop Up Stylus Light



FREE DJ & Recording Gear Catalog

CALL: 1-800-672-4268

Outside the U.S.A.: 1-714-891-5914
Mon-Fri 9am to 6pm, Sat 9am to 5pm PST (GMT-8)

Online Catalog www.pssl.com

Fax Toll Free 1-888-PSSL-FAX (777-5329)
 11711 Monarch St., Garden Grove, CA 92641

P
PRO SOUND
& STAGE
LIGHTING

Our 21st Year!

Teddy Pendergrass

GREATEST HITS



IN STORES NOW!



THE DETAILS

Cover: Usher

page 96 and cover

White cotton drawstring cargo pants \$62 by DKNY Jeans available at Macy's and Bloomingdale's nationwide.

page 99

Yellow cotton shirt \$240 by Paul Smith available at Barney's N.Y.C. and Paul Smith N.Y.C.; taupe nylon tank top \$48 by Rohas available at X, Los Angeles, Jeffrey Allen, Miami, and Patricia Fields, N.Y.C.; white cotton chinos \$60 by Polo Jeans Co. RALPH LAUREN available at Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Dillard's stores nationwide; belt by Calvin Klein; shoes by Patrick Cox.

VIBEFashion: "Splash"

page 132

Blue nylon boardshorts with lime green trim \$44 by Club Sportswear available at Sockeyes Beach and Sport, Dustin, FL, and Fifteenth St. Surf Shop, Newport Beach, CA.

page 133

Blue nylon embroidered logo shorts \$54 by Verso (for more information, please call 800-709-3333).

page 134

Blue and lime green poly/cotton poplin print indo boardshorts \$44.95 by Counter Culture; slides by Vans; sunglasses Mossimo Optics.

page 135

From left: White, yellow, and orange cotton short-sleeve T-shirt \$28 by Moss available at Mossimo Supply stores Costa Mesa and Pasadena, CA; orange and white butterfly floral print boardshorts \$46 by Quiksilver (for more information, please call 888-222-9970); punch-colored spandex one-piece swimsuit \$65 by Diesel available at Lyle Clothing, Miami, the Pink Cactus, Shreveport, LA, and Diesel Superstores N.Y.C. and San Francisco; white and red polyamide and elastic two-piece bathing suit \$150 by Moschino Mare available at select Barney's and Moschino Boutique, N.Y.C.; red and white nylon shorts \$32 by Girl Star available at Screen, N.Y.

page 136

From left: Red polyamide and elastic bikini with white lettering \$155 by Moschino Mare available at Oxygene, Miami and Moschino Boutique N.Y.C.; red and white cotton bamboo-print shirt \$36 by Girl Star available at Screen, N.Y.; pastel multicolored acetate and Lycra bikini \$105 by Amaya Arzuaga available at Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus stores; orange nylon boardshorts \$28 by TAGRAG available at Airshop, Boston, MA, and Nordstroms stores nationwide; white cotton sweater with blue chest stripe \$54 by LEVEL 7 available at Louis of Boston, Boston, MA, Ron Herman, L.A., Fred Segal, L.A., By George, Austin, TX, Neiman Marcus, and Nordstrom stores nationwide; denim floral blue and white boardshorts \$48 by Quiksilver (for more information, please call 888-222-9970); navy polyamide and elastic bikini with white trim and gold hearts \$170 by Moschino Mare available at select Neiman Marcus stores, Jerrie Shop, Cedarhurst, N.Y., and Moschino Boutique, N.Y.C.; patchwork print multicolored cotton bermuda shorts \$46 by Roxy by Quiksilver (for more information, please call 888-222-9970).

page 137

From left: Brown cotton paisley print short-sleeve shirt \$44 by Gotcha available at B&B Department stores nationwide and Brick, N.J.; navy blue polyester shirt with zipper \$26 by TAGRAG available at Designs, Boston Trading Co., and Urban Outfitters nationwide; white cotton twill pants \$58 by Nautica by David Chu available at select Marshall Fields, Lord and Taylor, and Dayton Hudson stores nationwide; hat by Club Sportswear.

VIBestyle: "Golden Girls"

Table of Contents, page 17

Outblood polyester and elastin crossover crystal bikini \$2,425 by Gucci available at select Gucci stores, Gucci N.Y.C. and Gucci L.A.; shoes by Manolo Blahnik.

page 138

Black Tactel, Lurex, nylon, and spandex moon dust triangle bikini with Brazilian pants \$64 by Mossimo Swim available at Planet Earth, N.Y.C., Gadzook's, and Everything but the Water stores nationwide; shoes by Stephane Kélian.

page 139

Red nylon and Lycra sequin string bikini \$185 by Norma Kamali available at Omo Norma Kamali (for more information, please call 800-8-KAMALI).

page 140

Bronze poly, Lurex, and spandex cher beaded triangle bikini \$64 by Mossimo Swim (for more information, please call 714-490-1333).

page 141

Silver polyester barbed-wire bikini \$262 by Todd Oldham available by special order at Todd Oldham, N.Y.C. and L.A. (for more information, call 212-219-3531 or 213-936-6045).

VIBestyle: "Kalifornia Love"

page 142

Black cotton short-sleeve woven shirt with white stitching \$46 by LEVEL 7 available

(continued on page 168)

WHAT IS WOO?



NEW LINE CINEMA



UNIVERSAL
RECORDS

COMING MAY 5th

Maxwell

John Forte

Jagged Edge

**The Motown
Family**

Jermaine Dupri

featuring DaBrat

Davina

**Lord Tariq &
Peter Gunz**

Xscape

**Camron &
Charli Baltimore**

Tyrese

Public Announcement

It's here. It's hot. It's on!

These artists and more will all be a part of the biggest celebration of Black Music Month in the land. June 10, the whole thing kicks off with Maxwell playing the grand opening of BET SoundStage Club. Then June 11-13, it's VIBE LIVE, loud & proud for a third blazin' year.

Call 407-939-6244 for Resort info. And check your nearest
CIRCUIT CITY to register to win a free trip to the party.

PLEASURE ISLAND

Walt Disney World
disneyworld.com



CIRCUIT CITY®

**VIBE
LIVE**

Under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Must be 21 to enter. Merchandise & BET. Valid I.D. required. Entertainment subject to change. ©Disney K2250052

PARTYLINES
FOR DOGS ONLY! 69c & up 18+

1-900-993-5069 Ext. 246
1-767-446-9407 LD. rates
1-900-420-BABE(2223) Ext.3021

82 Minutes 1hr 120 min

GET YOUR OWN LIVE CHAT!!!
IT'S ALL TRUE!
1-800-632-CHAT
1-800-596-RAPP

GAY CRUISE PARTIES!
1-800-666-GUYS
Gay Cruise 24 hours
GET OFF CHEAP! NO PREMIUM CHARGES
1-767-446-9021

THE VIPER ROOM
FREE PARTY/DATE LINE
1-607-252-6030
PHAT, FLY AND IN YOUR EYE!
Regular long distance, no extra charges 18+

SINGLES
BLONDE, MIXED & ASIAN GIRLS. Eager to meet men for good times. Local names and numbers
1-800-876-5847 18+ \$2.99/min

FREE FOR WOMEN! Don't Wait!
Find the man of your dreams today!
Call 1-800-888-6069 18+

PERSONAL DATES, DESIRABLE WOMEN.
Find out Free 1-800-498-9043
Adults over 18

LETICIA'S LATE SERVICE
Only 69c/min! Live 24 hrs!
1-268-404-6063

RICK'S DATING SERVICE
1-268-404-6215

Rated Best Service of 1994 in the industry! 18+ Int'l LD

PHONE NUMBERS! Local Singles & Couples
1-900-420-0420 ext. 31
Try it, it's worth \$2.99/min. 18+

GIRLS-BISSEXUALS-GAYS-COUPLES
Real Names & Phone Numbers
1-800-921-3383 1-900-745-4360 \$2.99/min 18+

Gays, lonely, need someone to talk to! Live girls,
Call now! 1-900-860-9000 ext. 2365
\$3.99/min 18+ servs 649-645-634

PSYCHICS
LUCK, MONEY, POWER
Sample our Psychics now!
1-800-646-9435
Adults over 18

SAMPLE MASTER PSYCHICS
Try it FREE 1-800-555-5233
Special Samples Line. Adults over 18

Find Love & Happiness

ASTROLOGY CLAIRVOYANT NUMEROLOGY TAROT

Psychic Loveline

Talk to the BEST Psychics in Matters of the Heart. Get Answers From Psychics Who Care

1-800-981-4153
Credentialed & Licensed Master
1-900-976-1222
FIRST 3 MIN FREE! \$3.99/min, 18+ Int'l LD

Hours Shine Brighter With Kenny's Psychic Advice

As Seen On TV

Do What The Stars Do!
Learn today what your future holds for you, family, money

Get some STAR POWER of your own!

Call Now
Kenny Kingston Psychic Hotline
7days - 24 hours
1-800-454-2126
1-800-815-4585
2.99 per minute
Adults and Children Only. Get Cost Media Inc. 305-575-1358

LA TOYA JACKSON'S Psychic Network
Call Now
1-800-373-2737 18+
USE YOUR CREDIT CARD AND SAVE \$1.00 PER MINUTE
1-800-994-1800 18+

My Authentic LIVE Psychics
Will help you find LOVE and HAPPINESS
Is Love in Your Star?
Is Love in Your Stars?

24hr Online, Inc.
New York, NY
For Entertainment Only
1-800-737-8820 18+
1-800-218-2442 18+
Member Love Call 1-800-737-8820 18+
Pay by CREDIT CARD AND SAVE \$1.00 PER MINUTE
1-800-218-2442 18+

BEST PSYCHIC SOURCE

Astrology • Clairvoyants • Tarot • Numerology

Have the life you always dreamed of with amazing insights from gifted psychics

AS LOW AS \$1.93/MINUTE
1-800-404-8302
1-900-370-6001
FIRST 2 MIN FREE (\$3.99/min, 18+ Int'l LD)

THE Psychic Romance SPECIALISTS

Try our elite group of gifted Psychics specializing in your personal questions about romance, love and mysteries of your heart. Our Specialists will respond and help guide you to the true happiness you deserve.

FREE 2 MINUTES! \$3.99/MINUTE
1-900-786-9935
1-800-577-5752
AS LOW AS \$1.93/MIN
CREDIT CARD OR CHECK ONLY
18+ Int'l LD. ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY

AS SEEN ON TV
KENNY KINGSTON PSYCHIC HOTLINE

THE MOST IMPORTANT PHONE CALL YOU'LL EVER MAKE

Kenny Kingston is the most sought after psychic in modern times. Watch his amazing collection of psychic readings.

Don't be afraid.
Call now.
1-800-454-2099
7 days, 24 hours. Only \$3.99 per minute
1-800-842-7681

BARBARA NORCROSS THE PALM BEACH PSYCHIC

Psychic Advisor to the Rich and Famous.
See Her For LIVE TV
PRADO DEL NORTE HOTEL
El Paso, Texas, June 3, 1976

TOI FREE
1-888-609-5111

THE AMAZING MIND READER
THE WORLDS most Celebrated Psychic
WILL DOUBLE YOUR CHANCES FOR FINDING LOVE AND HAPPINESS

15 MINUTES FREE
1-900-860-0133
\$3.99 per minute thereafter
1-800-390-1771
\$3.99 per minute thereafter

FREE Sample Psychic Reading!

you are just one free phone call away from the best psychic reading you've ever had!

Find out how!
1-800-305-5871
18+ For entertainment purposes only. First 3 minutes FREE!

TELEPHONE ENTERTAINMENT

CHEAP DATES! 24HRS Fr. 69c/min LD

PARTYLINE 1-888-994-9888 DATES 1-888-994-9399
Tami Love 1-268-404-4737
Boyd Wren 1-954-704-2766
Evelyn 011-678-3298
College Girls 011-678-3714
Gay Adult 1-268-946-637
Black Girls 1-954-704-2766

YOUNG BLACK GIRLS!
1-954-704-7310
1-954-404-7371

BLACK PARTY 24HRS! 1-888-404-7371
Partyline Love 1-268-444-7371
Black Singles Daterline! 1-268-404-7371
Hardcore! 011-678-3714
Gay Men Live! 1-268-404-6321

NASTY GIRLS! 69c/min 1-888-404-CHAT
Local Swinger Seeks Male LD 18+ 1-268-444-7371
Heated Lesbian Love 011-678-3714

YOUNG BLY GIRLS WANT IT FAST & HARD 18+
1-800-873-4126 1-900-993-5181

HORNY BLACK BEAUTIES 1-800-756-2768
HORNY H.S. SENIORS 1-800-515-4733
"SPICY" BISHOP AND GIRLS 1-800-306-1882
HORNY ORIENTAL GIRLS 1-800-704-4668
Frustrated Housewives-Need Relief!
Kinky Strip-tears-Love Please Sex! 1-800-495-2885
Hot Old Women-Be our New Top! 1-800-335-4018
"ORAL" BRITISH BABES 1-800-340-2385
College Cudds-See Us Major! 1-800-498-4626
Barbican Virgin 1-800-576-2867 18+ \$2.99/min

HORNY GAY BOYS
LET ME RUB YOUR BALD HEAD
1-800-315-2697 1-900-993-7431
adults only 18+

poor's SUCK!
HOT GUYS CALL 1-919-979-3748 18+
MANICAN ACROSS THE USA 1-800-749-3461

KINKY & UNCENSORED TALK!!!
Anything cool \$1.98/mi 18+ www.wetx.com
1-800-646 WILD (6333) 1-800-993-6227

CALL THE BOYS CLUB
1-800-315-2697 1-900-993-7431
adults only 18+

LIVE! HOT PARTY! 1-268-404-4900
EAVESDROP LINE 011-992-997-970
ADULTS ONLY INT'L LD APP.

LIVE! PRIVATE ONLY! 011-468-8335
SEX! SEX! SEX! 011-992-9739
adults only int'l ld app.

LIVE! ON! SEX! 011-478-7377
KINKY FANTASIES 1-800-490-2215
ADULTS ONLY! int'l ld app.

Lonely Housewives in Need! 1-800-478-6446
Black & Busty Young Men for Women SEX Now! 1-800-466-9397
Black & Busty Young Men for Women SEX Now! 1-800-466-9397
Black & Busty Young Men for Women SEX Now! 1-800-466-9397
Black & Busty Young Men for Women SEX Now! 1-800-466-9397

Dirty Delights. Phone Club for Men
1-800-866-9339
Adults over 18

HOT INEXPENSIVE TALK!
1-800-SEX-MODEL 1-800-SEX-8888
1-900-788-4900 1-900-FUN-6000 ext. 69

VOYEURS-LISTEN IN ON ACTUAL LIVE phone sex
1-800-646-4356 1-900-993-7377
College age girls 1-900-993-7377 18+ \$2.99/min

Very Hardcore Phone 1-973-497-9840
Mandy's Kink Line 1-664-490-6104
18+ Int'l LD rates apply

Sexually Aggressive Girls 1-800-738-3724
Titillating Talk/Busty Babes 1-900-993-8146
Stunning Sex-Male 1-900-993-8146 18+ Int'l LD

Lonley Housewives Need Relief!!!
Live On! \$2.98/mi 18+ 1-800-478-6446
1-800-277-1931 1-800-478-6446

WELCOME TO CLUB MALE!
1-973-497-9840
ENTER THE MAN ZONE
1-949-493-2172
Men For Screened Ladies 18+

THE MALE ROOM
Come in the back door! 24 hrs!
New! Gay Live! 18+ 1-268-404-6218
XXX Gay! LD 1-767-446-9053

FREE!
ALL NEW & ALL GAY
1-800-FREEGAY (373-3449) 18+

CHEAT THRILLS!
PARTY LISTEN & GET LUCKY LIVE!!
18+ **P.C.I.N.C. 1-268-404-4737 LOW INT'L LD**

THE SEX STORY IS OPEN 24 Hrs.
1-800-SEX-8888 1-800-SEX-8888
1-800-SEX-8888 1-800-SEX-8888

EXPLICIT HARD CORE TALK!!!
The nation around \$1.98/mi 18+ www.SEXX.com
1-800-788-1001 1-900-537-8484 011-992-9936

XXX GAY FANTASIES! 1-973-497-9840
HOT, HENTY & HUNG MEN! 1-973-497-9840
HOT, HENTY & HUNG MEN! 1-973-497-9840

ADULTS/DAY
IN YOUR FACE PHONE SEX! 011-468-8335
CHARGE & NASTY 1-800-490-2657

MUST BE 18+ INT'L LD APP.

BLONDIE

When compiling a list of hip hop heroes, new wavers Blondie don't immediately spring to mind. But in a perfect world, Deborah Harry, Chris Stein, Clem Burke, Jimmy Destri, Nigel Harrison, Gary Valentine, and Frank Infante would take their rightful place among the hip hop hierarchy. Blondie earned their (Adidas) stripes for solidifying the link between punk and hip hop; they made edgy pop music that wasn't afraid to wear its black influence out.

Formed in 1975, the band sprung out of New York City's post-Warhol art scene. Back then, Downtown was a giant game of 52 pickup, the cards landing wherever and in whomever's hands. It was a busy place where punkers, break dancers, graffiti artists, and postmodernists got busy

together. Friday night, the tribes gathered at the Mudd Club; the next day, it was up to the Boogie Down to party at the Fever. Blondie were the spiritual house band for these boho-meets-B-boy throwdowns.

Fronted by the unabashedly bleached ex-Playboy bunny Ms. Harry, Blondie broke with the 1979 No. 1 smash "Heart of Glass," which had the nerve to suggest to mainstream America that disco could be cool. They matched such success the next year with their version of the reggae standard "The Tide Is High" and followed that with a sonic smartbomb called "Rapture." In today's music climate, when everyone but Celine Dion has a guest rapper on their records, it's hard to appreciate just how revolutionary this blur of breakbeats and pop riffs was. Name-checking underground

legends Fab 5 Freddy and Grandmaster Flash, and with a vid that featured graf stars Futura 2000 and the late Jean Michel Basquiat, "Rapture" became the first rap song to top the pop charts. February 14, 1981.

But Blondie weren't just cultural carpet-baggers. Guitarist Chris Stein collaborated with Fab 5 on the music for the groundbreaking flick *Wild Style*. Working with MCs like Grandmaster Caz, Busy Bee, and Rammellzee, Stein and Freddy married art rock noise with uptown poetry—in a word, dope.

Sadly, an intragroup squabble and the ensuing suing led Blondie to call it quits in late 1982. But 16 years later, Blondie's classics, so frequently rocked on the radio, still bring a smile to the mugs of B-boys and mallrats alike.

Amey Linden

Tude (from left): Jimmy Destri, Deborah Harry, Clem Burke, Gary Valentine, Chris Stein, March 1977



SONY



RECORDABLE

PORTABLE

DIGITAL

VIRTUALLY UNSHOCKABLE

MINIDISC

YOU KNOW YOU WANT IT...

MAKE IT WITH MD



VANESSA ON THE MAKE.

ARE YOU A
PLAYER
OR ARE YOU
JUST
PLAYING?



STEP UP. YOUR DRINK IS WAITING.